

SOME POLITICAL ASPECTS OF COMMENSALITY

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A B S T R A C T

The Thesis discusses the significance of commensality in the development and maintenance of social relations. The cooking, distribution or consumption of food are treated as cultural mechanisms through which unity, equality, inequality, solidarity and separation can be communicated. Different examples are taken from different cultural areas to highlight different aspects of the problem of commensality.

The Lugbara descent group, the Nuer territorial group and the Relay Services of Great Britain are described to show how sharing food demonstrates the unity of a group, while at the same time reflecting the differentiation within it. The Azande system of blood-brotherhood is analysed as an aspect of commensality marked with equality of status significant in promoting stability within a political structure whose ethnic composition is markedly heterogeneous. The symbolism of the kola-nut is discussed as one item of food among the Igbo which symbolises the distinction between the 'Freeborn Igbo' and Osu. It marks the existence of status differentiation in a culture whose ideology is egalitarian. The commensal rules of Hindu India are discussed to emphasise the solidarity and status differentiation which commensality brings about within a whole culture. The Hussite material deals with the Holy Communion controversy in 15th century Bohemia, this is to illustrate the power of delineating equality or inequality which is inherent in sharing food. The denial of the chalice to the laity was seen by the reformers in Bohemia as a clear introduction of inequality within the ritual meal of Holy Communion. Reintroduction of communion under the species of bread and wine differentiated the reformers from Roman Catholics and became the crucial basis on which the struggle of the period was fought.

Sharing food in both the Freemasonig organisation and Rotary International is discussed to show how commensality is consciously pursued as a mechanism for creating and fostering friendship and mutual interest between people who in normal circumstances may never meet on an intimate level.

The study shows that, despite cultural differences between societies, commensality is a universal symbolic mechanism which is used in the development of social relationships of various sorts.

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INTRODUCTION

The Oxford English Dictionary defines commensality as "the habit of eating at the same table or continual feeding together at one table". What is implied in the definition is that commensality is a physical act of eating together. This seems to have been in the mind of W.R. Smith when he suggested that the essence of commensality consisted in the physical act of eating together (W.R. Smith, 1894:271).

I do not think that the habitual act of eating together in itself, would constitute commensality. Two unrelated individuals who eat at the same restaurant, at the same set times, even when they occupy the same table, do not thereby become commensal partners. Commensality indicates more than a physical act of inter-dining or drinking together. The Banyaro of East Africa seem to be aware of this in that they use two different words to express the same physical act, but one of the words indicates social intimacy as well. The words they use are "Kunywamu" and "Kunywa-hamu". Beattie writes:

"Kunywamu means 'drinking with one another', or rather inter-drinking. This reciprocal from of the verb implies a closer mutual participation than merely 'drinking together' which Banyaro would translate 'Kunywa-hamu' literally drinking in the same place. (Beattie J. 1958:198).

This obviously implies that commensality means more than simply eating in the same place at the same time. It is evident that for W.R. Smith too commensality implies greater intimacy than this.

"The act of eating and drinking together is the solemn and stated expression of the fact that all who share in the meal are brethren and that the duties of friendship and brotherhood are implicitly acknowledged in this common act". (W.R. Smith 1894:265 cited by Richards 1932:179).

Adrian Mayer moves beyond W.R. Smith and gives commensality a new connotation, by describing it as the rule of eating and drinking together (Cfr. Mayer 1956:120). Mayer's definition is significant in that it avoids over-emphasising the local and physical aspect of commensality. Food is the necessary content of commensal rules, but the form of those rules is socially and not nutritionally determined. Max Weber has already foreshadowed this approach when he writes:

"Fraternization at all times presupposes commensalism. It does not have to be actually practised in everyday life, but it must be ritually possible." (Weber 1948:402).

Commensality, then, means more than simply eating together. It is the expression of a social relationship through the physical act of eating and drinking. The pattern of this activity may vary from society to society. Thus Audrey Richard's description of the eating rules of the Bantu does not suggest that they have a communal meal, but rather emphasises that what the Bantu share may be an expression of a definite social group. She writes:

"Now the animal sacrificed is shared by the family descendants, but it must be divided with the utmost care according to the fixed kinship rules. The beast is cut into separate portions and these are then taken away and cooked and eaten by each household hearth. Communal cooking does not exist among these societies, as far as I am aware, and the sacrifice is never a communal meal, in the sense of a group of the whole society round one board." (Richards 1932:187 - see also Middleton 1960:122)

For the Bantu, commensal relationship would be demonstrated simply by the fact that a group has shared food of a certain kind. Fr. Mayo illustrates this point for some Southern Bantu Tribes:

"Among the Southern Bantu in particular, there is a special significance attached to the sharing of milk between two or more individuals....So also the Amasi or curded milk among the Zulu-Xosa people acquires a symbolic value in family transactions and rites. Amasi may only be eaten by members of the same household themselves - strangers may not share the dish." (Richards A.1932:194 citing Fr May 1906, *Anthropos* 1 467-468).

The kola-nut is also found to play a similar role for the Igbo of Nigeria which Amasi does for the Zulu-Xosa people. But among the Igbo, the kola-nut differentiates the free born Igbo from slaves who also are Igbo (See Chapter 111). Here one may speak of a commensal group as hereditary in so far as recruitment to it is by birth only. Eating together or sharing a particular type of food becomes a means of dramatising kinship of blood. For the Lugbara of Uganda both the living and the dead could be shown to form a hereditary commensal group.

"Are our ancestors not people of our lineage? They are our fathers and we are their children whom they have begotten. Those that have died stay near us and we feed and respect them. Does not a man help his father when he is old?" (Middleton 1960:25).

In India sharing food together is used to mark off status groups within the caste-system. There, eating with a person denotes equality while eating from his hand may imply different kinds of social relationship. Mayer writes:

"A superior caste will not eat from the cooking vessels nor the hands of a caste which it regards as inferior, nor will its members sit next to the inferior people in the same unbroken line when eating." (Mayer A.C.1960:33; cfr also Mayer A.C.1956:120; Srinivas 1952, No.13:268; Weber 1948:402; Harper E.B.1964:156).

In South Africa the Indian caste commensal rules appear to be reversed, the inferiors feed the superiors. Africans or coloured servants waken their employer with early morning

tea or coffee, they prepare their food, make their beds for them, wait on them at table, and do their lavatory for them. (Marquard Leo. 1969:129)

Van Den Berghe suggests that this is so because the society is designed to perpetuate racial inequality. (Van Den Berghe Cfr.1970:112). Yet elsewhere in Africa one can observe some other form of status inequality being expressed through the symbolism of sharing food (See Fortes M.1959:3; Gluchma M. 1970:55).

Crawley in fact emphasises that sharing food as a mark of solidarity, or union, is not something peculiar to primitive tribes but that the phenomenon can be identified throughout the world.

"Throughout the world, the closest bond is produced by the act of hospitality, the sharing of one's bread and salt with the stranger within the gates" (Crawley 1960:283).

Crawley's remark is significant since it represents sharing food as an important mechanism for creating friendship relationships. Commensality has in this respect become an important weapon for breaking the boundary or the barrier which may exist between individuals and between groups. In some societies sharing food has an almost magic power to create inviolable bonds between individuals who may not have met each other before.

"To eat together was, in the East, a sure pledge of protection. A man once prostrated himself before a Persian Grandi and implored protection from the rabble. The Nobleman gave him the remainder of a peach which he was eating, and when the incensed multitude arrived, and declared that the man had slain the only son of the nobleman, the heartbroken father replied: 'We have eaten together, go in peace!'"
(Brewer's Dictionary of Phrase and Fable: 321-322, Cfr. also p.800).

Since sharing food is recognised as a means of creating intimate relationship, one can therefore talk of commensal

relationship as achieved, to distinguish it from hereditary commensal groups. In this sense a whole range of mechanisms can be counted which are important for creating commensal groups or commensal partners. The most significant mechanism to this end is the initiation ceremony. Some initiation ceremonies such as the blood-brotherhood among the Azande, (see Chapter II) may include commensality. Other initiation ceremonies may provide necessary steps towards the enjoyment of full commensal relationships. These are found in the institutions of the Christian Religion where the initiation rite of Baptism is the essential conclusion for full participation in the ritual meal of Holy Communion (see Chapter V). Initiation holds true also for membership in the Freemasonic Order (see Chapter VI).

But whether one talks of hereditary or achieved commensal group, it is necessary that the group should be able to validate their unity by being able to share meals together, since sharing food is the necessary content of commensality.

From the above discussion it is obvious that commensality is a symbolic mechanism which is involved in the relation of power between individuals and groups. For example, people eat together when there is the need to reaffirm the unity of the group (Cfr. Richards 1932:178; Middleton 1960:93; Junod 1927:399). People may also eat together when they want to form or strengthen an alliance (Beidelman T.O. 1963:334; Crawley 1960:290; Evans-Pritchard E.C. 1953:204). On the other hand, people deliberately avoid eating with others because they want to emphasise social distance or status differentiation (see Crawley 1960:191; Leo Marquard 1969:128; Radcliffe Brown 1952:138, Stevenson H.N.C. 1954:54). In this context the abstention of Lord Mountbatten

of Burma from the Banquet given by the Queen in honour of the Emperor of Japan becomes interesting, and illustrates a fine aspect of the problems of commensality (See The Times p.1 October 6th 1971).

Men who eat together do so for a variety of reasons. They may do so simply because they enjoy a peaceful relationship (see Chapter 1B). People may also eat together because they are a functional group and have definite common economic interests (see Chapter 1B and the discussion of Rotary International in Chapter VI, closing part). Commensal groups can therefore be considered as interest groups. Their common interest need not be strictly economic. They must, however, have some social values which they articulate by sharing meals together.

Audrey Richards discusses commensality under the title "Sacralization of Food" Cfr. Richards 1932:162).

I do not think food is holy in itself. Sharing food may produce an inviolable bond. But I think she writes in the way she does because sharing food in primitive society is also intimately linked with the exercise and maintenance of authority, which is also linked with ritual powers. Otherwise commensality poses the same features of either status equality or differentiation in nearly all societies.

This Thesis is written in seven chapters. Chapter I is a study of three different types of groups in terms of the significance they give to the sharing of food. They are: lineage groups, territorial groups, and business groups. In Chapter IA, I discuss the composition of Lugbara descent groups, pointing out how they dramatise their unity by sharing sacrificial meat offered in the internal shrine of their ancestors. In IB, I discuss the Nuer commensal relationship

through settlement of disputes arising from homicide. In IC, I record the sharing of food by a business group in Great Britain to illustrate the point that commensality is significant for all kinds of ~~groups~~ or society. Chapter II discusses the Azande Blood-brotherhood to show that some systems of blood-brotherhood can have significant commensal value. In Chapter III, I discuss the symbolism of the Kola-nut among the Igbo of Nigeria - The Kola-Nut, a common enough sign of hospitality, has a crucial role in differentiating 'freeborn' Igbo from slaves and the ritually inferior Osu. In Chapter IV the Indian Caste System is discussed as a system of ranking, solidarity and separation expressed through the serving and eating of food. Chapters V and VI move away from the consideration of commensality in particular cultures to an examination of its functioning in three systems whose membership cuts across cultural and social boundaries. In Chapter VI, I discuss the controversy over the sharing of Holy Communion in 15th Century Bohemia. Chapter VI discusses the significance of commensality for Freemasonry and Rotary International.

The selection of what is, after all, a very small number of cases, can only provide a limited and tentative conclusion. However, the importance which a number of Anthropologists, from W. Robertson Smith To A.C. Mayer, have attached to commensality justifies the examination of ethnographic and histroical material from several different societies, since it is by such comparative analysis that the value of explanations offered in particular cases can be judged.

A STUDY OF LUGBARA DESCENT GROUPS THROUGH COMMENSALITY

What Middleton wishes to convey when he states that the Lugbara have no communal meal is that there is no one occasion on which the Lugbara come together for the purpose of 'social eating'; they assemble solely for ritual actions such as the naming day of a child (see Ramponi 1937).

Members of the same minimal lineage also come together to offer sacrifice at their junior ghost shrines (Middleton 1960:51). The elders of the same descent group also meet and exclusively offer sacrifice at their external lineage shrines (Middleton 1960:47;61). On each of these occasions the various groups reaffirm their unity by sharing some food and drink, part of which is used in sacrifice. But there is no greater occasion when the Lugbara emphasise their unity of blood, their degrees of segmentation and interrelatedness than when sacrifice is offered at the senior internal ghost shrines. Middleton writes:

"They are the only occasions at which all the members of the local community, or the representatives living and dead, meet together (Middleton 1960:123).

On these occasions both the living and the dead express their unity of blood by sharing the same beast. Commensality between the living and with their dead is believed to be possible by the Lugbara, because they hold that some animals have souls while others have not. Cattle, sheep and goats are said to have souls. When they are used in sacrifice it is the ancestors who 'eat' the souls, leaving the meat for the living descendants (see Middleton 1960:98).

Thus, the living and the dead of a descent group form one commensal group. The commensal group can also be defined as a unit within which inter-marriage is prohibited (Middleton 1960:120; 1965:51). The commensal group need neither be corporate

nor territorial but must all descend from a common ancestor (Middleton 1960:7). In certain sense it is coterminous with the clan (Middleton 1960:231). The smallest unit of the commensal group is the hut, where the married woman lives (Middleton 1960:5). Normally, however, the hut or huts belong to a part of the descent group which is known as the localised subclan (Middleton 1960:7). This subclan is a corporate group owning land in common. It is here that the Lugbara concept of a section and a lineage merge into one, because the section is the area where the Lugbara actually live on the ground (Middleton 1965:208).

Traditional Lugbara as a whole have no common authority authority being defined in terms of control of ancestral shrines, these shrines being simply stones or pieces of granite (Middleton 1960:46). There are different types of shrines for differing ritual needs (Middleton 1960:71) but what differentiates the shrines from each other is not their structural form but their location and purpose and these reflect the status of the man who officiates at sacrifice in them. In this respect it is the internal ghost shrines that are the most important for the Lugbara since they are the focal points where the members of a descent group re-emphasise their relationship by blood. It is also at these shrines that the elders of a given lineage demonstrate their authority before the wider segments of the community. In fact one could effectively argue that it is at the internal ghost shrine that the elder or would-be elder gets his authority to influence those under him, for authority among the Lugbara is purely derivative in form. The authority derived from the ancestors is a moral one, the elder has over-all authority in matters concerning the entire interest of the group. However, this authority is not coercive nor does it

include matters affecting the internal running of the junior member's homestead (Middleton 1965:74). In this case authority is distributed within the segment strictly according to age.

Middleton writes:

"Men should be content with their property, authority as defined by their lineage status, their age and general social position. (Middleton 1965:84).

The elder's authority is to be conceived in terms of the general maintenance of laws and order in his own lineage. This would present no problem if the eldership in a minimal lineage is held by the most senior in age, but this is not always so. The concept of the elder among the Lugbara meanders into different directions - sometimes he is the oldest in the community. But his correct designation is that he should be the first son of the first wife of a man who was an elder (Middleton 1960:11). This poses a problem in the community and is one of the problems which is resolved when the living and the dead come together to 'eat' at the internal shrine of the minimal lineage.

The Lugbara do not offer sacrifice at life crises, so the sacrifice especially at the internal ghost shrines is intimately linked with resolving the problems of authority. If the authority of the elder is disputed by one member, or if there is violence, or again if there are breaches in kinship obligations, all these are signs that due observance of law and order is not being maintained. It could also mean that land is not being proportioned according to the needs of each family. The elder whose authority is also defined by being able to inflict mystical sanctions may draw everyone's attention to these abuses by inflicting illness on any member of his group. The Lugbara thus understand sickness as symptom of community disorder

which calls for redress.

It is the duty of the elder to take the initiative and call all the members of the major lineage thus forming the commensal group. A person's eldership becomes effective because a number of the elders have accepted his invitation. This is why a number of people, specially elders who attend a sacrifice of this nature, is highly significant. People will attend for a variety of reasons which find support in Lugbara social ideology. The chief reason they assemble is to identify themselves with their lineage, namely to emphasise the unity of the descent group. Not to have an ancestor in common with other members of a group causes estrangement. A man in this situation is regarded as though he were not a normal human being (Middleton 1954:196) and in fact as an object (Middleton 1960). He might at any time be mutilated, killed or accepted depending on the whims of the person who encountered him.

I think it is relevant to indicate at this stage those who are expected to be present on this occasion. First and foremost are the ancestors who by virtue of their authority in the lineage need to be present when order is being restored.

"Are our ancestors not people of our lineage?
They are our father's and we are their children
whom they have begotten. Those that have died
stay near us in our home and we feed and respect
them. (Middleton 1960:25).

Among the living, all the members of the minimal lineage whose elder is convening the assembly are expected to be present (Middleton 1960:117). These people play host to the visitors. The representatives of the various minimal lineages of the same major lineage who are living in other sections or tribes of the Lugbara are invited. Also invited are neighbours who are not members of the descent group but who are on commensal terms not with the whole descent group but with the

minimal lineage whose elder is offering the sacrifice (Middleton 1960:119;1955:204).

They all know that a breach of order has occurred and it is their duty to resolve the issue so that everyone would be happy. But when they come together a certain degree of formality is needed. This is just noticeable with regard to their sitting position which is meant to demonstrate lineage relationship. The sitting position of the ancestors is the shrine which is the centre of the assembly.

Thus the nearness to the shrine would show how one is related through males to the founding ancestors. Wives and accessory kin sit in the background (see Middleton 1960:118; 120-21). Middleton constructs a correlation between the sitting position and direct descent through males.

"A sister's son will fear to eat the meat of the mother's brother's shrines, and to drink of their blood and beer. He fears to sit near those shrines because those ghosts would say 'Oh, who is this stranger? Why does he sit there? Was his mother a man, a man of our lineage? She was a woman and her clan is another, that which gave us cattle for that sister. Therefore we love him, since he is our child, but it is not good that he sits here, he will be with shame! Therefore he may attend to cut the meat and to help her mother's brother, but he eats that meat later, perhaps the following day'" (Middleton 1960:121). Willoughby records a similar sitting position for the Becwana (Willoughby 1927:207).

There are two seating arrangements during the ceremony. The first is a complete separation of the different lineages. This arrangement has a social value; it is useful for the visitors, who are thus able to identify the members of the minimal lineage who are sitting nearest to the shrine. In the same way the members of the minimal lineage can identify their guests. When everyone is seated the ceremony, which includes a judicial process, would begin, but this time there is no

cross-examination as the ancestors know those who are telling the truth. However, the living must pay great attention as it is for them to draw practical lessons from what ~~is~~ happening, for the discussion in hand may prove a point of reference for future settlement. The belief that everyone is speaking the truth helps to mitigate suspicion. Middleton writes:

"It is good that at this sacrifice all men should operate with one word. They should stop their anger and their envy. They must say true words. There in the shrine are the ghosts of our ancestors who hear our words. They know that words are in our hearts. (Middleton 1960:145).

There are two major ritual addresses. The first, usually spoken by the elder of the minimal lineage, is a short address of welcome to the guests and a formal introduction of the business in hand. The second, which is much longer (Middleton says it could last for more than thirty minutes) could be delivered by any senior man from the same minimal lineage.

It centres on an explicit exposition of the causes leading to breaches in kinship and why the ancestors found it necessary to inflict sickness on one of the members of the minimal lineage (see Middleton 1960:142-143). The ritual address also explains why there has been previous segmentations into different lineages demonstrated in the separate sitting positions.

"The elder states the facts of the case in full, sometimes with long and detailed genealogical discussion and he may include the main genealogical history and relationship of the lineage segments represented in the congregation. (Middleton 1966:93).

The addresses are followed by the offering of the animal in sacrifice which is completed by its consumption. This is vital, for the animal used in sacrifice belongs to the lineage and to eat of it is an acknowledgement of some link with that

lineage. I think what Radcliffe Brown has written for the Andaman Islanders could also be considered to be true for the Lugbara:

"Since the greater part of social life is the getting and eating of food, to place a person outside the social life would be to forbid him from partaking of the food that is obtained by the society and consumed by it". (Radcliffe Brown, A.A. 1922:279 cited by Richards A. 1932:181-182).

Partaking of food together at the internal shrine is an exposition of the kinship boundary and marks off the types of social relationship within it.

It is at the internal shrine that the Lugbara experiences everything that makes his social life worthwhile. His social as well as his political life is dramatised there before him. His ancestors, the immediate segments as well as the members of his major lineage are all represented. To demonstrate the communal aspect of the affair at the shrine, representatives of other descent groups with whom he is socially in contact but not agnatically related are present.

I have defined these agnatically unrelated persons as the commensal partners. They are the Juru (the descent group from whom he could take a wife (Middleton 1954:195)). They are also the people with whom a descent group would eventually settle disputes or even homicide by discussion.

"When you walked among Juru you did not fear. They did not kill you on sight. They said 'Perhaps this man comes to see our sisters and to sleep with them; he does no ill. If your lineage lost a man or a woman who had gone to visit another lineage, if he did not return you went to look for him. Then slowly you heard they had killed him. Then at night you went to kill those people; men of your lineage without counting went there to kill as many as they could. They came back having killed many, perhaps five, perhaps ten. They came here to fight, the enemies closed their hearts to die..... and it did not stop. People entered secretly to kill. Then the elders tired of these things and slowly they went to mend words among themselves" (Middleton 1965:49)

The logic of this passage is clearly evident and I think it is the reason why Middleton has described a tribe as the largest group within which fighting is settled by discussion (Middleton 1960:7). And I believe that the representatives at the shrine, even though few in number, reflects social relationship among the Lugbara. The assembly has a close parallel to a coronation when heads of government who are in relationship to one another come to witness the enthronement of a new monarch. In the same way the elders by their presence confirm the position and authority of the new elder. But in the case of the Lugbara the analogy suffers because here we are dealing with a segmentary political structure, and not with heads of states. The importance of the analogy remains however; if it is realised that the elder is positively vital in this type of society and is really a channel of communication not only with elders from the same descent group but also elders from different tribes, hence elders could stop fighting in a sub-tribe (Middleton 1965:50).

The position of the elder in the Lugbara tribe is extremely important. He helps to reduce tension and make men feel that the tribe is an autonomous entity. This also helps explain how the Lugbara society numbering about 244,000 souls (Middleton 1960:1) manages to survive as a recognizable entity despite the segmentary nature of its political system.

What has been shown so far is that the Lugbara are held together by a system of eldership backed by their ancestors. This could be very misleading, especially if one fails to realise that even within the lineage segment, there could be internal tension that the elder would have to deal with. This is why even during ~~the~~ sharing of the meal at the shrine a high degree of political skill is needed on the part of the

elder to manoeuvre the most senior members of the minimal lineage into submission.

This becomes noticeable when the seating position is altered for everyone to share in the meal. The new arrangement is an attempt to demonstrate in symbolic form the history and inter-relatedness of each lineage. The seating arrangements follow the principle of age but again, in keeping with Lugbara social ideology, age is important from the point of view of correlation with the ancestors. A man may be younger than his senior uncle yet still be considered to be older in ritual matters (Middleton 1960:122). This is why a lot of skill and knowledge in lineage history is necessary for the ordering of the sitting position. Middleton has given us a clear case where an elder succeeded in softening the hearts of the most senior in his descent group because he succeeded in giving them a position which appealed to them.

"Both Ohimani and Oguda sat with the elders. Bengu told me later that this was to avoid embarrassment and open quarrelling with Ohimani; his sitting with Ondua gave him a higher position than that to which he was entitled, but the fact that Oguda was sat with them also immediately detracted from this position. By inviting them both to sit with him, Ondua as it were changed their status from those of heads of components segments of Aratea to those of old men and close agnatic kin (Middleton 1960:146).

What is eaten cannot be very much, judging from the composition of the group and the degree of the division of the meat that goes on. It is really a symbolic participation in the food used in sacrifice. But it is important to ascertain whether the sacrificial meat is raw or cooked, and whether the cooked meat is placed on the shrine or not. Who eats what is a clear demonstration of social distance or group solidarity in a given social field. Firstly, only the true agnates who are members of the minimal lineage whose elder is offering the

sacrifice may eat the food and drink, of which the beer is placed on the actual shrine.

What follows next is the distribution of raw meat. It is extremely vital in its role in the articulation of the linkage between the different representatives who have assembled. It may also be that the distribution of raw meat is rooted in tradition. Although care is taken to ensure that everyone receives an equal share of the meat, this aspect of the distribution is not of major political or social consequence - what is of major importance is that certain classes of people should receive a definite part of the animal, the denial of which is likely to cause a row. In this case receiving some part of the beast is a mark of social status. Often it is also a mark of intimate blood-relationship:

"Only he (the elder) may eat certain parts of the meat at sacrifice - the spare meat of the chest, the liver, testicles, penis and intestines (Middleton 1960:11).

The legs of the animal go to the component segments of the host lineage (Middleton 1960:121). This aspect of the division is reciprocal so that whatever part of the animal a group gets from a given group, the latter expects to receive the same when it is the turn of the former to offer sacrifice (Middleton 1960:122;1955:220).

The raw meat is then taken home by the elder. On reaching home he is obliged to re-enact the ceremony he has just witnessed among his own segment. The value of this re-enactment is that it emphasises the unity of that lineage with the host lineage from whom the meat was received.

The elder also plays a very important role in holding the different groups together. He is a link between the same descent groups who are living in different parts of the Lugbara country. One would begin to appreciate this aspect of his

role if it is realised that the country, although fertile, is divided by rivers and streams, which make contact between the same descent groups relatively difficult. (see Middleton 1955:204).

When one correlates the different factors influencing the Lugbara in his social life one begins to see the position of an elder in its true setting. He is responsible for the lineage life-stocks as well as the daughters of the lineage. (Middleton 1955:206). He is really a 'big man'. Middleton has given the view of the elder within the lineage by comparing him to a forest of trees.

"There are many trees in the forest there, some are great and some are small. The trees that are big push the smaller ones aside, and the smaller ones use the big ones to support against the wind and against the other big trees. We men here are like that; some are big and others are small, and the small lean out against the big ones. The big ones are our elders and the rain makers. (Middleton 1960:230).

The elder links the different groups together. He is the sign post which shows who are ritually united and which people recognise closeness of relationship. Middleton writes:

"That he does represent the whole section may be seen from the fact that, on his return from a sacrifice, he brings sacrificial meat which he distributes among the whole group, accessory as well as host lineages." (Middleton 1955:210).

His representative power in ritual matters is very significant even outside his circle. His failure to attend a sacrifice could be tantamount to a complete severance of relationship between his group and the segment offering the sacrifice.

Behind the motives influencing the sacrifice at the internal shrine is the unstated desire to count the numerical strength of the descent group and to emphasise the importance of having children, by means of which the continuity of the

lineage is assured. Thus the importance of children is demonstrated for a number of reasons. Without children, one cannot be an ancestor, a status which is prized highly by the Lugbara.

"Men who are childless become neither ghosts nor O'biwa. They join a collectivity of childless ancestors called 'Aguvua', people who are said to be forgotten or lost to their kin (Middleton 1960:53;1955:212) Cfr also Ramponi 1937:585).

The importance of children comes out even in the actual sacrifice in that the symbolic feeding of the dead seem to depend on having children:

"A ghost watches a man giving food at sacrifice to him. A brother of that ghost begs food of him. The other will laugh and say 'Have you no son?' Then he thinks 'Why does my child not give me food? (Middleton 1960:45).

Lugbaraland is fertile but it is obvious from the dispersal of the descent groups that land is not a hereditary commodity. To obtain possession of land and to keep it, it is necessary to have children who would be able to fight to defend it (see Middleton 1960:47).

The Lugbara makes use of the descent groups as means of providing allies to defend their land. The sacrifice at the internal shrine is in some way an articulation of an allied group, a group that must be called together when the need arises. Children also have a direct effect on the distribution and exercise of authority in a given lineage. An increase in the numerical strength of the group leads to rivalry and to segmentation. An elder must also be able to provide land for the grown up men within his group. Should he fail in this, the dispersal of the group becomes a necessary accepted fact (Middleton 1960:6).

Finally children are the prolongation of the life of the elders who also are linked to the ancestors by direct descent.

The ancestors also are conceptually linked to the founding ancestors (Middleton 1960:68). The political system of the Lugbara is based on the ideology of descent implicit in the idiom of ancestor worship. I think the following lines are very true of the Lugbara:

"They evidently feel that the unseen world is all around them, and that those who are lost to sight are never far away; but the clan spirit colours their religious concepts, as it does the political philosophy and with one or two remarkable exceptions, no one worships the spirits of those who could not command their fealty were they present in the flesh" (Willoughby 1928:17) Cfr also Fortes M. 1965:16;133; Freedman M. 1958:84; Goody J.R.D. 383; Kenyatta 1953:164).

From all the evidence advanced so far it becomes obvious that the Lugbara ancestral shrine is the symbol of the unity of the descent group. But this unity is dramatised or made real through the system of commensality. Sharing food in the shrine is an expression of unity. The Lugbara link themselves with their dead through the idiom of ancestor cult, in which the ancestors are represented as sharing part of the meal.

The Lugbara make a clear distinction between the different parts of the animal used in sacrifice. Some of the parts of the animal are more important than others. Thus the soul, which is the most important part of any living thing, is said to be eaten by the ancestors. This is to demonstrate the authority and the supreme importance of the ancestors in Lineage affairs. Next in importance is the kidney, and the liver; all these belong to the elder whom one may represent as a vice-regent for the ancestors. The legs go to the component segments to demonstrate their unity with the host lineage.

Thus the one beast is used to demonstrate unity of descent on the one hand and authority of the elders on the other. The Lugbara commensality in one single performance symbolises unity,

marks off status differentiation and builds up a united alliance. The interesting point however is that Lugbara commensality is not dependent on the quantity of what is eaten. It is rather dependent on why a beast was shared and what part of the beast was received or eaten.

PEACE - THE BASIC CONCEPT OF NUER COMMENSAL RELATIONSHIP

The recurrent theme in Lugbara commensal relationship is Unity. For the Nuer of the Sudan eating together appears to be the expression of peace rather than unity. To eat together among the Nuer seems to be the basic manifestation of peaceful neighbourliness. Evans Pritchards writes:

"Scarcity of food at times and the narrow margin that for most of the year divides sufficiency from famine cause a high degree of interdependence among members of the smaller local groups, which may be said to have a common stock of food. Although each household owns its own food, does its own cooking and provides independently for the needs of its members, men and much less, women and children, eat in one another's homes to such an extent that, looked at from outside, the whole community is seen to be partaking of a joint supply" (Evans Pritchards 1940:84)

The peaceful relationship which Evans Pritchard has implied in the citation above could be brought to an end by an act of homicide. Marriage also affects interdining to some extent. (Cfr. Evans Pritchard 1960:100) since it cuts a young man off from eating together with prospective parents-in-law. In this section I will omit any other type of problem affecting interdining and concentrate my analysis on the reconstruction of relationship after it has been disrupted by homicide.

Homicide is the greatest threat to the enjoyment of peace and commensal relationship among the Nuer for it not only forces the slayer to eat alone but places a temporary interdict between the kin of the slayer and the kin of the victim which separates the two distinct groups of kin from eating together (Cfr. Evans Pritchard 1956:176, Gluckman M. 1970:16).

Homicide has a special sociological interpretation for the Nuer. Homicide means death resulting directly from an

injury inflicted by someone else. When a person dies several years after the injury was received, the Nuer count this also as homicide (see Evans Pritchard 1956:19, 1953:203). That the Nuer make little distinction between the two can be seen from the amount of compensation that follows the settlements of either kind.

I shall open the discussion with an examination of settlement which Evans Pritchard has observed among the Nuer. A man of Jikul village had wounded a Lual man with a fishing spear. After several years the man died and the Lual lineage demanded compensation for homicide. Custom permitted this. The actual ceremony took place at the village of a third party, an ally of the Jikul named Ngwol. The proceedings began with 'interdrinking'. Evans Pritchard writes:

"After some drinking of beer, a sure sign that a settlement was certain, the people sat in the sun to watch proceedings" (Evans Pritchard 1953:204).

In view of the fact that normal interdining had been broken as a result of the homicide, it is extremely interesting to discover why the discussion began with some form of commensal action, since interdining signifies peace. Secondly the fact that the three groups represented in the discussion were sure that a settlement would be reached suggests that some negotiations may have been gone through before the public hearing.

There is every reason to suggest that this is really so. First of all, as soon as the homicide became public knowledge life in the village would come to a standstill owing to the mystical sanctions which forbid the two groups of kin involved in homicide to interdine. Owing to the composition of Nuer settlement, it is very easy to break this law. From this angle alone it is vital that a settlement should be started. Secondly on purely economic reasons, it is highly desirable

that a settlement should be reached so that tension would be lessened in the village.

The Nuer are pastoral people who are dependent on the shifting nature of their environment for their ultimate survival. A community that is separated during their flood season may find themselves united in one pasturing spot during the dry season (see Max Gluckman 1970:5). Apart from this the Nuer man or family can take residence anywhere. Evans Pritchard writes:

"Nuer clans are everywhere much dispersed, so that in any village or camp one finds representatives of diverse clans. Small lineages have moved freely over Nuerland and have settled here and there and have aggregated themselves to agnatically unrelated elements in local communities" (Evans Pritchard 1940:286).

It is therefore possible that a man could be living next door to another man, whose kin his next of kin has killed in another village (see Max Gluckman 1970:12). To avert further deterioration in the relationship it becomes really necessary to start discussion. Moreover it is hardly feasible that marriage would be celebrated in a village while a case of homicide is left hanging. All the merriment and lovemaking that go with marriage celebrations may involve most of the young men and girls of a given village community. Since the village community may be a combination of different descent groups, it means that marriage celebrations could create occasions where there are dangers of interdining (Evans Pritchard 1960:65). These would not only bring mystical sanctions but would prove a meeting point for two people whose relationships have already been strained.

Strictly speaking, there are no commensal groups among the Nuer. There are certainly commensal partners. I am taking this interpretation because the commensal lineage among the

Nuer cannot be defined in terms of lineage groups alone since different members of a lineage could live in different villages where they form an interdining group on the village level (see Evans Pritchard 1940:115). On the other hand, although each village is a unit and could be called an interdining group, it cannot be defined as an exclusive commensal group since each village contains units of families who have relations outside the village with whom they interact on a kinship level.

The Nuer therefore combine the kinship idiom and the residential idiom to define their field of interaction on commensal terms. The Nuer social relationship is fraught with a remarkable degree of complexity, inconsistencies and even contradictions (see Evans Pritchard 1940b:273, Max Gluckman 1970:22). On the evidence of all these I am inclined to refer to the Nuer commensal partners as a network of interacting persons. What may circumscribe these people is not food, but quarrels, and above all homicide. Max Gluckman seems to refer to this when he writes:

"Men have certain changes in the rules of War. Men of the same village fight each other with clubs, not spears. Men of different villages fight each other with spears" (Max Gluckman 1970:8, see also Evans Pritchard 1940a:151).

There is one important element in the Nuer concept of commensality which undermines any attempt to regard a village as an exclusive commensal group. When a homicide does occur, it is not always the function of the village to negotiate a settlement. Settlements or negotiations are the affairs between the kin of the victim and the kin of the slayer (see Gluckman 1970:14). It is also the groups of kin who would provide or share the cattle which form a very important part of the homicide deal. Moreover the feuding relationship which

homicide engenders does not seem to involve villages but groups of kin. From this it becomes certain that it is not the whole network of commensal partners which is involved in the settlement.

Nevertheless a settlement is highly desirable, not only among the groups of kin who are parties to the dispute but also for all the villages around, since the end of the dispute would signal a return of peace and normal social relationship (see Evans Pritchard 1956:294). But to suggest that peace would return as soon as a settlement is reached would be counted as an over-statement. At best one can say that a settlement could achieve a relationship which may in some circumstances enable them to share a meal. It is therefore difficult to maintain that a settlement achieves a complete return of commensality between the two sets of kin affected by homicide. Evans Pritchard remarks:

"A bone (the dead man) lies between them, indeed all Nuer recognise that, in spite of payments and sacrifice, a feud goes on forever, for the dead man's kin never ceases to have war in their hearts" (Evans Pritchard 1940a:154).

This does not mean that a settlement is not necessary or desirable. Evans Pritchard seems to imply that homicide defines a new system of relationship between two distinct groups of kin - a relationship which is exploited to the full at the time relationship is being re-established.

The degree of interaction between the two kin groups may prove a useful factor in hastening a settlement. There is no doubt that the more eager the groups are to reach a settlement, the more it is a reflection of intimate relationship. For settlement may never be negotiated between two sets of kin which are not likely to interact.

The processes leading to a settlement are highly institutionalised. The initiative is taken by the slayer himself who, on taking cognisance of the situation, may take sanctuary with the Leopard Skin Chief - a priest who exercises considerable political office in an area with no centralised administration (see Evans Pritchard 1940a:163). This office which he exercises during the process of settling disputes arising out of homicide is of immense value, not only to the two groups involved but also in minimising tension in Nuerland. The influence which he brings to bear upon any situation comes to him only because the two parties have accepted him as a mediator (Cfr. Evans Pritchard 1940a:178). Yet it is he and he alone who can perform a number of ritual functions which are considered vital in ending an apparently feuding relationship (see Evans Pritchard 1956:293). He is in fact, a bridge that connects two groups of kin who are split by the fact that homicide has occurred. Consequently one can say that it is a part of his office to try to re-establish commensal relationship between kin groups split by homicide. But his position should not be exaggerated. He has no authority in the village and for all we know could be recruited from an entirely different community.

What is required for peaceful co-existence is a common desire of both parties to negotiate peace. There is no authority to impose it from the outside. Evans Pritchard writes:

"Only if both parties want the affair settled can the Chief intervene successfully. He is the machinery which enables groups to bring about a normal state of affairs when they desire to achieve this end" (Evans Pritchard 1960:175).

It is obvious from this citation that re-establishment of peace between two groups torn apart by homicide is dependent solely on their mutual desire to return at least to a potentially

peaceful state which may enable them to interdine. So the establishment of commensality is dependent not primarily on the economic status of the two groups but on their desire to return to peaceful neighbourliness. One can therefore see why the Nuer commensal relationship is almost synonymous with peace. Hence the commencement of the proceedings with interdrinking can be explained in terms of there being private negotiations which may have settled matters earlier on. The settlement which Evans Pritchard reported between the Jikul and the Lual can be described as a public announcement of an agreement already reached in private. The interdrinking with which the settlement was started off would therefore become a symbol of peace already achieved (see Evans Pritchard 1940a:154). If this is true, the assembled men would only become a group of men who have come to witness the 'signing' of an agreement already negotiated. Then the interdrinking achieves fresh significance. It becomes a truly commensal act. For commensality is concerned not with private negotiations or private meals but meals shared in public (see Evans Pritchard 1940a:154).

Even the process of the public discussion clearly reveals that some negotiation had already been held and agreement reached on a number of issues. There is no reference to the number of cattle paid and how they were distributed.

The group seem to have gathered merely to witness the signing of the agreement and to rehearse the system of social relationship between the two groups of kin. This can be seen from the nature of the speeches made, from which I will quote

just one to illustrate the point being made. Evans Pritchard records:

"The Lual representative called on the spirits of our community. He began with a long account of the history of the lineage of the man responsible for the death, with interminable reference to past disputes, threatening that if ever the Jikul or the Ngwol fought his people again, the Lual would exterminate them to all the events which led up to this quarrel in which the dead man had been wounded, and to cattle which had been paid or promised in compensation for this homicide and for the cattle which were being demanded"(Evans Pritchard 1953:204)

Each group including the Leopard Skin Chief made strong reference to history, to the established relationship between the two groups. It is in fact history or traditions that was being emphasised. This is extremely important for today's settlement may provide a background for public relationship and may be referred to in subsequent discussions. It is therefore history or tradition that governs the system of inter-action among the Nuer. Nowhere is Malinowski's writing on tradition more applicable than among the Nuer. Malinowski writes:

"Let us realise that in primitive conditions tradition is of supreme value for the community and nothing matters as much as the conformity and conservatism of its members. Order and civilization can be maintained only by strict adhesion to the lore and knowledge received from previous generations. Laxity in this weakens the cohesion of the group and imperils its cultural outfit to the point of threatening its existence"
(Malinowski 1948:22)

When all had paid tribute to tradition the priest concluded the ceremony with the killing of an ox, to which everyone present helped himself (see Evans Pritchard 1953:205) and also 1956:296). The texts suggest that the two groups of kin who were parties to the dispute could partake of the meat from the ox if both were present. In view of the 'inter-

drinking' which preceded the discussion it is difficult to determine the social value of commensal action with which the proceedings were brought to a close. In fact it appears to me to have no value except that the absolution, which went with it, is a sign that anyone involved could move together in peace, the peace which was already foreshadowed not only in the private negotiations, but also in the inter-dining with which the public hearing was begun.

1C: LUNCHEON PARTY - A SYMBOL OF BUSINESS INTEREST

This section is a record of commensality involving a business group in Great Britain. I am making the record to illustrate a point that commensality can be identified in all kinds of societies.

The business group I am referring to is the Relay Services Association of Great Britain. It includes all those who have interest in:

The reception, transmission, retransmission and reproduction, by means of wire, of signals, messages, news, programmes and entertainments, whether aural or visual and whether termed radio, wireless, television or by any other name.

(See Relay Services Journal 12 Nov.1963:3)

It is evident from the definition given that the Association embraces a variety of business interests or occupational groups. Nevertheless they are held together because they could be affected by a common legislation. The Association therefore seems to have been formed as a unit to act as an effective pressure group against legislation which could be against the business interest of those involved in transmission.

"As our Relay Services Association gets its strength from the various areas, the alliance gets its strength from the various representatives in each country. Originally a European Association, we have now had members in Argentine, Canada and the United States of America. Relay organisations throughout the world have a common interest in operating together"

(Relay Services Association Journal Vol.36
No.11/12 Nov.Dec. 1970:94)

The Relay Services Association is therefore a united body of businesses. But they use the Luncheon party as a public forum to demonstrate publicly their unity. Individuals present at the Luncheon party usually include the Director General of the British Broadcasting Corporation, the Director General of the Independent Television Services. Each business is present with its own representative.

The Luncheon party is symbolic because it is an occasion where the Relay Services Association are able to meet together, share a meal and put out a united statement before the Press, for all the leading newspapers in the country are invited to the Luncheon party (see List of invitations of the Relay Services Association 24th No.1970). In fact the Luncheon party looks like a business negotiation lunch, for present is the Minister in Charge of Communications and a Minister of State from the Department of Employment. The Ministries seem to be representing the general public.

The Annual Luncheon is now permanently held in the Dorchester Hotel. The choice itself is important for it reflects the need to accomodate an ever increasing numbers as the membership of Relay Services grows.

"There is a certain ebb and flow in the annual attendance at the National Luncheon of the Relay Services Association. It has fluctuated Considerably in recent years with apparently no special reason to account for the variations. Sometimes the members and the guests turn up in maximum force, leading the organisers to expect a further increase in the next year and raising doubts as to the adequacy of the customary accommodation. In the event, some moderating influence has restored the balance and confirmed the appropriateness of the now invariable choice of the Dorchester".

(Relay Association Journal 1970:83).

There is no need to emphasise that the meal is good. Care is taken to make a good selection of menu and wines:

"The menu was excellent and the wines, painstakingly selected by the Chairman of the Council (an undoubted attraction) were superb. Make a note of them: A Poyferre Montrachet, 1967 and a Chateau Leoville (St. Julien) of 1960".

(Relay Association Journal 1970:84).

Everyone present appeared to have enjoyed the meal. There were plenty of cigars and good liquers. People talked and laughed. Soon the Chairman introduced the principal guest, who is usually the Minister of Telecommunication. He is to address the representatives of the Association.

It is his speech that defines the interest of the different groups represented. The Press men are ready to take his reports. The Relay Association members are on edge to hear whether his speech will contain new policies towards the Relay Services. Here is an extract from the speech of Mr. Christopher Chataway, the Minister of Posts and Telecommunication:-

"Sir, I hope that in the weeks and months ahead, I shall have the opportunity of talking with your Association and with your Officers and I believe that there are quite a number of things that may be of mutual interest and that we may talk about, perhaps, the terms of the Relay Licences now available, what form they should take and their duration, and I suppose that your officers may want to discuss the Post Office Act of 1969, the extent of the Post Office Monopoly, the way it is working, and so on..... How much regulation should there be in the distribution of radio and television programmes by wire"? (Rt. Hon. Christopher Chataway M. P. Relay Services Luncheon Nov. 1970; Relay Services Journal P.970: 85).

The response to the speech of the Minister which is normally given by the Chairman of the Relay Services Association shows that the Relay Services have different interests from that of the Minister. He is quick to remind the Minister of the assurances given to the Association by previous governments:

"Your Ministry is aware of the objections to the restrictions placed on relay operators..... reasons for our objections..... first when relay started, operators were encouraged under licence with few restrictions".

(Relay Association Journal 1970:85).

The Luncheon Party is therefore to be seen as an occasion where different people having interests in the Relay operation meet together to express their opinion on current problems facing the service. As the output of the relay services affects the public who are the consumers, what happens in the Luncheon party is important to the public at large. This is why the Press men are there to report to the public. Commenting on the speech

made by the Minister to the same Association in 1971,
the Guardian of 10th November 1971 has this headline:

BROADCASTING COUNCIL A POTENTIAL THREAT says Mr. Chataway

(See the Guardian 10th November 1971 for
 the report).

Although the Minister and the Relay Association apparently have expressed different points of view, each party is aware of the utility of the other. The Luncheon party is therefore a symbol of common acceptance of the fact that the Relay Services does a lot of good and needs protection from the Government, who are in turn caretakers of the public interest. So the Minister is highly anxious that the Relay should continue to operate but should be restricted in its mode of operation. What Paul Ferris has shown to be the relationship between the bill brokers and the banks in the City of London could be true of the relationship between the Ministry and the Relay Services.

"You think to yourself - what do we do now?
 He wants to continue in business, and on the whole I want him to continue in business,
 He serves a purpose and we gain something out of him". (Paul Ferris 1960:65).

Considered from another viewpoint the Luncheon party demonstrates to the Relay Services those members who are still in business. This is an occasion for all the members to meet together. It is very easy for the Directors to know those who are not represented.

Considered from another viewpoint the Luncheon party symbolises the unity of the Relay Services Association. One can almost argue that the Luncheon party is like a roll call in that each member is able to find out which of the members has gone out of business.

It is in fact on one of these occasions that the liquidation

of C. E. Watkins & Sons Limited a private Company, became known to all the members of the Association (see Relay Services Journal Jan-Mar. 1971).

Commensality expressed in the Luncheon party therefore symbolises unity. In this sense one can compare the commensality of the Relay Services at the Dorchester with the commensality expressed by the Lugbara in the ancestral shrines. Unlike the ancestral cult which stresses family solidarity or peace and unity within the descent group, the different members of the Association are interested in the unity of the Association to procure individual interests and the interest is not in children. It is money - it is progress - and certainly continuity in the business. These are dramatised in the Luncheon party.

CHAPTER II

COMMENSALITY AND THE STRUCTURE OF
RITUALIZED PERSONAL RELATIONS

In this chapter it will be claimed that blood-brotherhood can be interpreted as a form of commensality, and a number of cases will be cited. I shall then limit my assignment to the functioning of blood-brotherhood in the Zande political structure.

Evans Pritchard (1933:131) describes blood-brotherhood as a pact or alliance formed between two persons by mutual act in which each swallows the blood of the other. This pact is essentially personal, a freely chosen form of contractual relationship (Evans Pritchard E.E. (1933:133; Eisenstadt S.N. 1956:90; Beidelman T.O. 1963:334). The essence of the pact is that the participants must swallow each other's blood. (Evans Pritchard E.E. 1933:137; Hocart A.M. 1935:113-114; Crawley, 1960:29 citing Robertson Smith, 1903).

The following notes made by Evans Pritchard illustrate the necessity of getting the blood into the respective participants' stomachs to achieve the validity of the ceremony:

"On one of the occasions on which I witnessed the ceremony, one of the participants swallowed his own blood by mistake. Nobody minded the mistake...But once you have performed the ceremony and your stomach contains your blood-brother's blood, the sanctions of the pact work automatically without your partner having to set them in motion." (Evans Pritchard E.E. 1933:145-6).

The relationship which the pact sets up is as permanent and enduring as kinship (Beattie J.M. 1958:200; Beidelman T.O. 1963:326; Evans Pritchard, 1933:146; Hocart A.M. 1935) and sometimes the effect of the pact is said to exercise some influence over the descent groups of the original participants. (Beidelman T.O. 1963:331). It differs, however, from kinship, since the pact is voluntary (Beidelman, 1963:321; Beattie J.M. 1958:199; Evans Pritchard E.E. 1933:138), while kinship is ascribed.

Sometimes the pact joins not only two individuals, but also two families and even two countries. Harry Tegnaeus, who has collected a considerable amount of information about the blood pact from different corners of the globe, has illustrated its use in joining two countries.

"In Matthaeus Parisiensis Historia Anglorum, we find the following account of blood-pact from the year 1236. The people of Galloway, the Isle of Man and part of Ireland joined together in a league to defend the rights of one Thomas, son of the Laird of Galloway, against the decision of the king of Scotland, who had divided the heritage among the three legitimate daughters of the dead laird. The conspirators and their chiefs - called by Matthaeus "the barbarians" - opened veins in their chests and let the blood drip into a large bowl. They shook the bowl to mix the blood and drank from it, one after the other, as a symbol of their indissoluble alliance until death, in success as in failure. (Matthaeus Parisiensis Historia Anglorum L-1640 cited by Harry Tegnaeus 1952:24).

It is not intended to claim that all examples of blood-brotherhood are ipso facto examples of commensality, but simply that certain cases of blood-brotherhood can be analysed as such. In order to resolve the problem of whether or not the blood pact constitutes commensality, it is vital to show that the pact in itself constitutes some form of a meal. Beidelman describes the festive nature of the occasion of forming the pact for the Kaguru of Northern Tanzania:

"On the day selected, the two men and their witnesses met and a sheep was slain. The person who had first sought to make the covenant appears to have been the one who provided the animal. The animal was butchered and its meat roasted to make a feast for those present. The liver, one of the most desirable portions of any animal as far as traditional Kaguru are concerned, was roasted and kept aside. Then each of the two men cut his own breast, near the heart, and put his blood on a portion of the roasted liver. Then each ate the portion of the liver on which his comrade's blood had been smeared." (Beidelman T.O. 1963:325).

The Scythians on the other hand become 'blood brothers'

to each other by mixing their blood with wine. They seem to indicate the purpose of the pact by having their defensive weapons also dipped in the wine. Harry Tegnaeus reports:

"The Scythians made covenants in the following manner. They made incisions in the bellies of the participants with a small knife, or sword and mixed the blood received with wine in a large drinking bowl. They then dipped into the bowl a sword, arrows, battle axe and javelin. A long curse was pronounced and the mixture of blood and wine was drunk not only by the partners to the treaty but also by those of the highest rank among their followers." (Harry Tegnaeus, 1952:19).

The Azande customary method of enacting the pact looks less formal than either of the two methods described above. Nevertheless the Azande have something to eat besides drinking each other's blood. Evans Pritchard has observed that the two participants consume each other's blood by eating salted groundnut which each has rubbed in the other's blood. (Evans Pritchard, 1933:137).

Since the blood brothers had to consume some element of food with the blood, it becomes obvious that the blood pact involves some form of commensal action. Crawley, however, appears to suggest that in the primitive world, where salt was not known, blood stood for salt (Crawley, 1960:250). Whether one follows this interpretation or accepts the Kaguru, Scythian and the Azande method of enacting the pact, it is clear that the mutual drinking of blood in the three areas named constitutes some form of symbolic meal. The blood pact is supposed to be backed by a strong sanction.

Evans Pritchard writes:

"Open failure to fulfill the obligation of the pact brings upon a man not only magical retribution but also public censure. He becomes an object of contempt to his neighbours and shame to his kinsmen. (Evans Pritchard E.E. 1933:148).

It can therefore be maintained that the blood pact is a form of creating commensal relationship. This pact exercises some social influence not only on the participants themselves but plays quite a considerable part in shaping and maintaining the distribution of power among the Azande of Central Africa.

The Azande may make a blood pact for a variety of social reasons. First of all they never make the blood pact with kinsmen. (Tegnaeus H. 1952:160; Evans Pritchard E.E. 1933:135). It is essentially a tool for the creation or cementing of a relationship which is considered vital for the individual. The Azande are patrilineal, but the dispersal of their descent groups makes it extremely difficult for them to mobilize kin support in times of need. The blood-partners seem to be able to supply this need, Evans Pritchard writes:

"This being the case with the Azande, I found after taking down a few genealogies at the commencement of my studies that except that in the royal clan, genealogical relationship between clansmen were very seldom known and usually quite untraceable, and that even first and second cousins were so widely dispersed that the relationship could have little significance for conduct. (Evans Pritchard, 1971:14).

The pact fulfils a number of social roles especially with regard to the exchange of mutual help. One could in fact argue that the blood pact is created solely to further commensal relationship. It opens up a new channel whereby the "brothers" expect to invite and be invited for the occasion of sharing beer and other festivities, but above all the partners are bound to assist each other in time of crisis.

Evans Pritchard records:

Blood-brotherhood gives to the vague sentiments of friendship with its indefinite obligations, a status comparable to that of close kin relationship. But, though I have observed that it is often friends of long standing who exchange blood with one another, I do not think they are ever motivated by purely sentimental reasons. Each knows that the other can assist him in a number of ways. (Evans Pritchard E.E.1933:133).

The blood-brothers among the Azande may exchange material benefits and provide each other with various kinds of support, especially where kin ties are thin. There is yet one important role which it supplies and which cannot be provided by kin. One of the rules governing kinship behaviour pattern is that the younger should respect the elder. This may involve deference, restrictions and inhibitions leading to a tense atmosphere. This is remarkably absent in the relationship between blood-brothers. In fact, Evans Pritchard has suggested that blood-brothers involve themselves in joking relationships making use of practical jokes which, if used between relatives by blood or between ordinary friends, would cause a lot of strain but are taken for granted between blood-brothers. (Evans Pritchard, 1933:151).

The interesting thing about Azande blood-brotherhood is that it achieves ideally the true meaning of commensality. The partners exchange ideas, material benefits and even invitations on the basis of equality. This is probably why the relationship is never strained. Demands are never made which could not be returned in equivalent terms. Evans Pritchard writes:

"Blood-brothers do not make unreasonable requests to each other among the Azande. Reciprocity of services makes this impossible since it is expected that there should be an even balance in exchange of property. (Evans Pritchard E.E. 1933:151).

As has been noted, the behaviour pattern between the blood-brother is not formal. This is why the pact functions in a less spectacular, but more continuous manner from day-to-day in ordinary routines of social life. When there is, however, any social activity, such as beer parties, or when a partner kills some beast, his blood-brother is always there to receive his share. (Evans Pritchard, 1933:150). The exchange of visits between blood-brothers makes each well known to his partner's kin. The initiation into the pact of the brotherhood involving some commensal relationship is further used to create commensal partners, for according to Evans Pritchard:

.....the word bakuremi, my blood-brother.....In its primary sense the term of address refers to the person who has drunk the speaker's blood, but it is extended in a secondary sense to embrace all the members of this man's clan. (Evans Pritchard, 1933:132).

The relationship was taken seriously especially before the coming of Europeans. It extended as much to the real blood-brother as to his immediate relatives. (Evans Pritchard, 1933:150). Furthermore, the unity between two clans which is created by a blood pact often leads to alliance through marriage. The blood brothers do not refuse each other anything for fear of the sanctions imposed by the fact. It follows, therefore, that when a person has a marriageable daughter, the partner has the first claim to her if he so desires (Evans Pritchard, 1933:148). Since blood-brothers must come from two unrelated clans, the pact becomes a mechanism for uniting these two clans. In a country like Azande, with its history of long-drawn-out wars, one can not over-exaggerate the social significance of such a pact, especially when the two clans live next to one another. Thus, Evans Pritchard points out:

Both in kingdoms and on the small neighbourhood level there has come about a most remarkable assimilation of different foreign peoples in Zande society, a product of conquest and of political institutions. It has been, on a smaller scale, as considerable an achievement as can be claimed by, shall we say, the United States or Israel. (Evans Pritchard E.E 1971:21).

The blood pact in this sense is a friendship-making mechanism. In fact, it seems to me that some form of negotiation may have been undertaken in the past before the pact was concluded. Evans Pritchard, for example, refers to the fact that younger men were under obligation to consult their elders before they consummated the pact. The purpose of this was ^{to} discover any outstanding differences between the parties if any existed and could not be resolved, the pact would either be deferred or refused entirely (Evans Pritchard, 1933:133). Seen in this light, the blood-brotherhood would constitute a uniting force bringing together two unrelated clans which in fact could be hostile to each other (Evans Pritchard, 1933:132), in which case the blood pact becomes a sign or a symbol that there is peace between two distinct clans.

However, the blood pact is also useful for the individual involved. This is why the Zande may have private motives for negotiating the pact. Often the need for protection while on service or on business in the neighbouring tribes is a strong motive for seeking the pact. The pact in this instance is like a passport or an insurance policy in an area where individual security is not guaranteed in a formal way. This is important if it is remembered that the Azande and some of their neighbouring tribes have known long wars, raids, ambushing and kidnapping. Evans Pritchard writes

"The respectability and importance of the chiefs depend on the number of slaves in their possession. These are held to add to their importance as retainers and labourers; and being kidnapped from their neighbours for their own special use, are not bartered either amongst themselves or adjoining tribes".(Evans Pritchard,1971:216).

The importance paid to the blood pact in a border raid situation is demonstrated by the following example given by Evans Pritchard:

"When the prince, accompanied by a few attendants, arrived at night at the homestead selected by the oracle for the assembly of his warriors, he instructed the spy to see that no one was to proceed into enemy country, Ka fuga yulu, to carry warning to the enemy by night, for a man might do so to spare his in-laws or blood-brothers; and I have heard of cases when this happened.(Evans Pritchard, 1957a:215).

An individual Azande may in fact make the blood pact with a complete stranger. When this is so, it is their custom that the specific purpose for which the pact is being negotiated should be mentioned before the agreement is sealed. Here it becomes specifically a socio-economic contract where deceit and low cunning cannot be ruled out. The following incident reported by Evans Pritchard is very revealing:

"A Zande prince went through the ceremony of blood-brotherhood with a mamur (Egyptian or Sudanese official)..On this occasion the prince let the blood-soaked half fall to the ground and chewed the bloodless half. As he had not consumed any of the mamur's blood, none of the obligations of blood-brotherhood were binding on him and he felt quite free to act against the interests of the mamur and made full use of this freedom".(Evans Pritchard 1933:145).

This incident throws some light on the commensal nature of the blood pact. What validates the agreement is not the curse or the spell used during the ceremony. The validity is secured by the mutual swallowing of the blood by the participants. This is what distinguishes blood-brotherhood from oath taking. Oath taking binds people to an agreement without any eating being involved (see Shack William, 1963:203; also Driberg,1935:102).

Although blood is consumed in the pact, the method of enacting the pact resembles oath taking. In the former case, the two participants are aware of the mutual advantages which the pact will provide for them. It becomes a socio-economic agreement which should ensure not only safety of the partners but economic success. Evans Pritchard writes:

"Thus, when a Zande makes blood-brotherhood with a foreigner to facilitate his journey, he will state exactly what he wants from his blood-brother, namely that he is to act as a guide, protector and surety for the party of travellers, while the foreigner on his part will mention in his spell various objects of wealth which he knows Azande bring with them on such journeys for the purpose of exchange." (Evans Pritchard, 1933:141).

This form of the blood-pact may not be restricted to Zande citizens and foreigners. In fact, the pact can be formed between Zanda nationals purely for security purposes because even within the same Azande centralized administration, uninhabited lands stretching out for miles do sometimes separate two provincial capitals which would make physical mobility as precarious inside the Azande kingdom as outside it. (cfr. Evans Pritchard, 1971:235; also 1957: 240). The blood-pact, within the context of providing safe conduct through uninhabited lands which normally create an appropriate hiding place for kidnappers, becomes an important social tool for controlling economic relationships between individuals of different territorial groups.

But even within the same 'city' or within the same provincial administration, the blood-pact is still considered necessary for protection against premeditated murder. There are a number of things which could make the Zande angry; friction caused by the amalgamation and living together of different clans, differentiated by distinct historical origins; a high degree of envy and various forms of political

rivalry. Evans Pritchard writes:

"Commoners bear ill will against commoners and princes hate princes. Likewise a wealthy commoner will be a patron to a poorer commoner and there will seldom be malice between them because the incentive to malice and the opportunity for creating it do not easily arise. A rich commoner will envy another rich commoner and a poor man will be jealous of another poor man. Offence is more easily taken at the words or actions of an equal than of a superior or inferior."
(Evans Pritchard, 1937:105).

These differences could lead to murder. The king whose duty it is to control administration has not got adequate machinery to carry this out. Because of this inherent incapacity, some killings are effected against the king's wishes. Evans Pritchard writes:

"It is evident also that in the case of some brutal executions they were carried out in his name but without his authorization, for absolute monarch though he was if his followers killed a man for some offence in his name, he was compelled to accept the situation...Moreover, powerful though he was, he had only limited means of controlling what happened outside his court and there can be no doubt that influential men sometimes bullied those whom they administered in his name" (Evans Pritchard, 1957:92)

All these quotations serve to establish the point that the blood-pact acts informally as a mechanism for alleviating rivalry between two individuals of the same social level. For the Azande, only two people of the same socio-economic status could negotiate the pact. This stems from the reciprocity of the obligation which the pact establishes. Since only people of the same income group do actually envy each other, it follows that the blood-pact would eliminate this envy thus reducing tension between territorial groups.

Withcraft is intimately linked with envy and hatred among the Azande and is a daily practice. It provides an explanation for many misfortunes of life. For the Azande believe that some people are witches and could injure them by virtue of their inherent witchcraft. (Evans Pritchard, 1937:21). When people die, or experience some natural calamity, recourse is had to witchcraft for an explanation and in many cases attempts are made to identify the malefactor. But the interesting thing about Azande witchcraft is that it is normally the result of envy. Consequently, it occurs normally between people of similar status and standing. (Evans Pritchard, 1937:113; Max Gluckman, 1970:102).

The useful inference to be drawn from this is that the blood-pact plays a very significant role in reducing the number of people against whom an accusation could effectively be made. First of all, only people of similar status could afford to make the blood-pact. Secondly, kinsmen do not accuse each other of witchcraft. The individual is therefore able to eliminate quite easily his kinsmen, his blood-brothers, his social superiors and inferiors, and focus on those social equals with whom he has no links. The blood-pact is extremely vital in the realm of witchcraft.

When an individual continues to suffer an accusation of this nature, his blood-brother is usually beside him to provide support. Sometimes, when the accused wants to prove himself innocent, it is only his blood-brother who could enable him to do so without further social offence. The proof of innocence can only be made if he is able to show that either his father or son has got no withcraft substance (see Evans Pritchard, 1937), for witchcraft among the Azande is hereditary (Max Gluckman, 1970:91). But in

order to prove this, the stomach of either father or son must be ripped open and this is normally the task of a blood-brother. Evans Pritchard writes:

"My blood-brother, I am much worried by the tongues of men, for people are always accusing me of witchcraft. Since it is my son who has died, I want someone to open his belly that I may see my witchcraft because he is my son."
(His blood-brother replies):

'What you say, sir, is true, for it is to perform such actions that we make blood-brotherhood with you and we will cut open your son's belly.' (Evans Pritchard 1937:43).

The blood-pact is a means by which the participants provide material services for each other and reduce tension which would normally arise in kinship relations. Evans Pritchard has suggested that the term is so much a household word among the Azande that it is probably the first word a visitor to the society would catch (Evans Pritchard, 1933:132). When one correlates this social fact with Evans Pritchard's other view that witchcraft accusation or witchcraft threats could force a person to leave his home, one is inclined to argue that blood-brothers could form a cluster of settlements, thus eliminating threats from witchcraft. This becomes real if one realises that an Azande settlement is not characterized by kinship.

Evans Pritchard writes:

"The Zandeland local groupings are not, except in the case of a few close neighbours, associated with clans or sections of clans, nor are they spoken about by any kinship reference."
(Evans Pritchard, 1971:19).

If one is to explain the daily use of the term bakuremi, my blood-brother, it must be that settlements are characterized more by association of blood-brothers than anything else.

I have so far restricted the analysis of the blood-brotherhood among the Azande to its role in creating and maintaining social links. I will now focus on its role in the acquisition of the symbolism of power among the Azande and the informal indirect part it plays in protecting the existing social structure in traditional Zande society.

Evans Pritchard has noted that the Azande nation as he saw it was a unit resulting from military conquest, the conquered being ruled ^{by} their victors - the Ambomu under the Avongara Royal House (Evans Pritchard, 1961:116; 1971:9-10). In some sense the Azande kingdom was centrally administered by a king who must be a descendant from the Avongara clan (Evans Pritchard, 1957:88), but, because of the nature of the military conquest, the conquerors preferred to have a king who would be an overall ruler but who would have helpers to rule the respective parts of the kingdom in his name. To qualify as a ruler, one must either be of the Avongara clan or wealthy. (cfr. Evans Pritchard, 1971:160 also 1971:218-9).

Among the traditional Azande, two items were the principal means of wealth. These were women and spears. First, a person without spears was a poor man, a man without political authority and, in fact, he was a defenceless man (Evans Pritchard, 1957a:241; 1971:237). The important point here is that the blood-pact was closely associated with the duty of providing this commodity for the partner.

This was specifically so where the blood-pact was between a man living in Central Zandeland and another living in a remote district. Evans Pritchard writes:

"When he feels inclined, the northerner will pay a visit to the centre of Zande country where he will enjoy the hospitality of his blood-brother from whose house he will return laden with one or two spears, or some bark cloth, or other such articles which are difficult to obtain in his far-off district". (Evans Pritchard, 1933:134-135).

The second symbol of wealth and power was women. An unmarried man was a poor man. The blood-brotherhood was also closely associated with the provision of women for his partner. Evans Pritchard writes:

"If your daughter is espoused to no one and I come to ask for her hand in marriage and you refuse to give me her hand in marriage, may you die from the blood, may all of your kin perish" (Evans Pritchard, 1933:141).

Since the blood-brotherhood is intimately associated with spears and first choice of a marriageable daughter - the two items which were vital for the acquisition of political power, I am inclined to argue that the help derived from the pact enables one to start off well in the acquisition of symbolisms of power or to retain it if one already has it. For to be able to dispense with spears and women easily was a demonstration of political power. (Evans Pritchard, 1971:187). In fact, both women and spears seemed to be interchangeable as signs of wealth. Evans Pritchard writes:

"Zande durable wealth was chiefly in metal, principally spears, but metal was valued for its use in obtaining wives. The real wealth was in women, and a rich man was one who had many wives and this was the same whether he was noble or commoner. The more the wives, the more the labour and the more the food, the greater the hospitality, the greater the following and the greater the prestige and authority." (Evans Pritchard, 1971:223).

Wealth was a necessary condition to obtain political power. This was necessary for both commoners and the noblemen. For among the Azande there were two classes of people - the nobles and the commoners (Evans Pritchard, 1933:135). Wealth or appointment to an office never transformed a commoner into a nobleman, nor could poverty transform a nobleman into a commoner. I want to show that the blood-pact had served informally to preserve class distinction among the Azande. Among the Azande, the blood-pact was not made between noblemen and commoners. The reason given by Professor Evans Pritchard was that:

"Princes have to settle cases and dispense justice and direct administration. An alliance of blood would militate against the fairness of their judgements and paralyse their execution!" (Evans Pritchard, 1933:135).

On the surface this reason appears very convincing. The noblemen were all potential governors, potential administrators. If they were to make the pact with commoners, the obligation of the pact would have compelled them to ignore certain misdemeanours, which would inevitably lead to a lot of malpractice in the administration of justice. Evans Pritchard has reported a case where the man involved was an administrator and a close friend of a king. The king would have been compelled to ignore or pardon his actions if they had made the blood-pact together.

Evans Pritchard writes:

"In the past a prince never took the authority of Ligbu away from a man for a small matter, only for a big reason, such as witchcraft, disloyalty, theft of tribute and adultery with the wives of his subjects. It was on account of such matters that a prince used to take Ligbu from a man and put another in his place. Gangura drove from Ligbu one of his elders, whose name was Bandapai of the Abanzoma clan. Bandapai had congress with the wife of his own son, because she was pleasing to him. Bandapai also killed with witchcraft another of Gangura's men. (E. Pritchard, 1971:212).

It is obvious that the nature of the obligation of blood-brotherhood among the Azande would have forced the king to pardon Bandapai had they made a blood-pact.

My own argument, however, is that it is possible to view this question from an angle other than that of partiality of justice issue which is being used by the nobles in the administration of justice. After all, the king who ruled the whole of Azande society used to do so with the aid he got from commoner governors, who also were committed to administer justice. Evans Pritchard has recorded the administrative pattern of Azande political structure:

"The layout of each province was on the same pattern as the layout of the whole kingdom. At the centre was the court of the ruler, and from that ran the paths, the veins of the kingdom, which led to the courts of his deputies, the aligbu, each of whom was responsible to the governor for summoning the people of his district for war and labour and for collecting tribute when required and it was his duty to maintain order in the district." (Evans Pritchard, 1971:170).

Since each of the administrators was concerned with the maintenance of law and order in his province, a duty which was incumbent on the governor whether of noble birth or not, I am therefore inclined to argue that the reason why Azande princes did not make blood-pacts with commoners was not necessarily because they administered justice but because they did not want to forfeit their power and status by negotiating a pact which spelt complete equality.

Therefore, one could argue from the principles surrounding the blood-brotherhood among the Azande that to negotiate a pact between the nobles and their subjects would have been abnormal. First of all, it would have been difficult for a subject to carry out the demands of the

contract. For the contract required equality in the reciprocity of services which each partner had to give to the other. To have negotiated the pact on the part of the nobles would have been an implicit acceptance of a change in the social structure. It would have meant that all the Azande were equal in all things. The nobles were conscious of this and this is probably why they refuse to negotiate the contract. For one of the effects of the pact has been shown to involve the exchange of women.

The Azande are exogamous, but the Avongara clan, the clan of the noblemen, is endogamous. If they had negotiated the pact, they would have been forced to exchange their women with commoners. Instead, they kept their women to ensure their superiority and maintenance of their distinct identity. Evans Pritchard writes:

"Moreover, it was the ancient custom of the nobles to take their kinswomen to wife, including their sisters on the spear-side and then their daughters. It was therefore impossible to be certain, at least unless and until they bore children, whether the many princesses who lived in the royal quarters were there as sisters or as wives or as both" (Evans Pritchard, 1971:179).

It is easy to see from this that the sole reason why the noblemen did not make the blood-brotherhood pact with the commoners could not be explained in terms of their roles as administrators of justice. Actually, I am inclined to argue that the nobles were more concerned with the preservation of their authority and status than with their duties as rulers. Nowhere is this more apparent than in the relationships between rulers and ruled that involved the exchange of gifts. The subject could present the ruler with spears (Evans Pritchard, 1971:185). The king, on the other hand, could grant a number of spears to any of his

subjects for some specific social need, which usually meant marriage. (Evans Pritchard, 1971:187). At court, the king could authorise his domestic staff to distribute cooked food to his courtiers and subjects. (Evans Pritchard, 1971: 191-2). Although the king or the ruler could exchange different Azande valuables with his subjects, he could not eat cooked food presented to him by any of his common subjects for fear of losing his authority. (Evans Pritchard writes:

"All these things they give to a prince, he does not keep them from the people. If, for example, it is oil, the prince has bowls of porridge cooked, and the relish to go with the porridge would be oil. Those things the subject of a prince presents to him, he must not eat a single one of them, and his chief wife must not eat a single one of them, for if they eat of them the people of his province will all depart and attach themselves to a different prince." (Evans Pritchard, 1971:217).

From this reference, it is easy to see that it is not only the mechanism of the blood-brotherhood that the Azande could deploy to mark off social inequality. Food serves the same purpose. At first sight this refusal of food from inferiors is reminiscent of caste distinctions. This comparison is incorrect, since the concept of pollution, while it is essential to the ideology of caste, is lacking in relations between Zande nobles and commoners. Subjects could eat in the houses of their rulers without defiling them. Aristocrats refuse to eat the gifts of food for political reasons, not mystical reasons, but, as it has been previously argued, Zande blood-brotherhood with a commoner would have been equivalent to accepting food from him. Where acceptance implies equality, refusal can maintain inequality.

The blood-brotherhood among the Azande seems to have played a considerable part in mitigating tension in the

country, thus indirectly promoting harmony and stability. It has been shown that tension did not exist among the Azande where two individuals enjoyed disparity of social status. It has been shown also that only two individuals of similar status envied and accused each other of witchcraft. Since only people of similar status could afford to make the blood-pact among the Azande, it follows that the mechanism minimised the number of people with whom one could be at enmity or in conflict.

The rules governing the formation of the blood-brotherhood among the Azande suggest the existence of certain marks of status differentiation. We do not know what these are. They can only be known by the Azande themselves because one of the ways by which status groups or individuals defined themselves was precisely by abstaining from making blood-pacts with inferiors.

There is however one important point which arises from the Azande system of blood-brotherhood. Every aspect of Azande blood-brotherhood represents some form of equality, in contrast to relationships such as Godparenthood (Compadrazgo) as practised in many parts of the world, which is of the patron/client type (Foster G.M. 1953, 1960, 1969; Van den Gergh, 1966; Mintz J.S.W. and Wolf E. 1950; Vogt E. 3 197; Cutileiro 1970). Godparenthood does not, of itself, give rise to relationships based on equality or inequality. Its marked tendency is to create personal relationships very much nearer to patron/client types. (Foster E.M. 1969:260-272). The same pattern of relationship is also apparent in the Didinga system of best friends. (see Driberg J.H. 1935:102).

Although Godparenthood and the system of best friends may ensure that the friends exchange food, they do not have to do so on the basis of equality or inequality.

Commensality poses the problem of either eating together or not, that is, either acceptance of equality of status or explicit rejection of it. Sociologically, commensality can never be accidental or incidental; it always has a message about equality.

CHAPTER III

THE POLITICS OF THE KOLA-NUT IN TRADITIONAL IGBO LIFE

In this chapter I discuss the significance that the Igbo attach to the sharing, or non-sharing, of the kola-nut and try to assess the commensal value of the nut within Igbo traditional culture.

I will therefore consider the social consequences of not sharing the kola-nut during or within marriage negotiations. In section B I shall consider the significance of the kola-nut in other spheres of interaction involving non-kinsfolk or where the host and the stranger¹ are about to establish their social identity or come to an agreement on a specific situation.

Cohen notes: "The kola is a nut, the size of a Brazilian nut, with a colour ranging from dark red to cream white (Cohen 1966:20. see also Uchendu V.C.1965:74). Alexander Allan, J.R. and Charles S. Hertz J.R. add: "Nuts of the cola tree (chiefly cola nitida and cola acuminate) are used by a large number of tropical West African societies as a stimulant and expectorant. Users chew the nut in its raw form and expectorate the resulting mixture of cola and saliva at frequent intervals" (1967:8).

¹For want of a better word, I am using the term stranger in a diminutive form. Some may call it the applied sense. Some authors may in fact feel I have stripped the word stranger of its classical sociological connotation. Elliott P. Skinner 1963 would define the stranger as a person in a cultural setting different from his own. And Simmel even suggested that a person in this environment would not subject himself to the conventions of that society. Julian Pitt Rivers 1963 has used the same word in a way which could enable someone to give it an applied meaning. "In contrast to a member of the community whose status is identifiable by reference to its norms and is recognised by everyone, the stranger is incorporated only through a personal bond with an established member, he has as it were no direct jural relationship with anyone else, no place within the system, no status save that of a stranger (which is a kind of self contradiction: the status of being statusless."

Our discussion is concerned with the symbolic significance which the Igbo attach to the presence of the kola-nut in a given situation. Although the Igbo have been considered a cultural unit, the significance of the kola-nut will not be evident unless we show that , within Igbo society, there is social differentiation which is highlighted by the use of the kola-nut.

Much has been made of the Igbo egalitarian ideology. Igbos are said to be people who possess no common head (Ottenber S. 1958:295. Crowder M. 1962:75. Anene J.C.1966;17, Horton 1954:316. 1956:26. Leith Ross S. 1937:206.) Coleman J.S. records:

"Finally, among the Igbo and the Ibibio, with several exceptions authority is dispersed among groups rather than centralised in anyone individual or body. Traditional societies and age-grade organisations played an important role in the indigenous government process. In general according to most Igbos it was essentially democratic". (Coleman J.C. 1965:33)

The representation of the Igbo as essentially democratic invites a consideration as to the criteria which governs intra-group relationships in an area which is without centralized administration and yet regarded as democratic. The treatment of this question will appear in section B. Our immediate problem is with the place of the kola-nut in the sphere of marriage. The Igbo are exogamous (Uchendu 1964:4). Marriage negotiations affect the stranger/host relationship as defined above. Before we consider the various implications of the kola-nut in marriage let us establish

I (cont'd..)

I am therefore applying the word stranger to cover the individuals or groups of persons in the homesteads of another group with whom they could exchange wives. Even when their territories happen to be contiguous, they become strangers to one another as representatives of opposing group interests. I could have used the word guest but it has a tone of welcome and of acceptance which the word stranger has not.

that the kola-nut is an essential requirement for marriage negotiations. Adams R.F.G (1934:455) records a marriage negotiation in Igbo country in which he locates the presence of the kola-nut. Referring to both parties to the marriage he writes:

"If neither of them finds faults with each other the young man will buy eight pots of tombo, two legs of meat, two heads of tobacco, potash, four kola-nuts and after adding some money will go with his father to give his relation inlaw".

We should not allow ourselves to think that, wherever there is technically no consanguinous reason to prohibit marital union, marriage would normally be allowed to exist. This is not the case, Besides consanguinity, there are two other socially recognised stigmas which inhibit marriage between some groups and it is within these groups that the kola-nut becomes very significant. These groups are the ohu (slave); the 'osu' and the freeborn.

The ohu (slave) Horton tells us is a property-less man since he and his apparent possessions including his wife belong to his original owner (cf also Ayandele E.A. 1969:331). The osu on the other hand form a distinct category of people. Arikpo describes them as a "tabooed category of persons within their community who were obliged to ~~inter~~marry and to accept exclusion from most of the social activities of the community (Arikpo 1956:201). Then there is the other group the freeborn who constitute the majority of Igbo society.

Since both the osu and the slave marry ^{within} their own groups our discussion deals with the implication of the non-presentation - therefore non-sharing-of the kola-nut on more formal occasions especially marriage and particularly its significance as a boundary marker in the marital

relationship between the freeborn and 'osu'.

R.F.G. Adams shows that the presentation of the kola-nut is a sign that the discussion of the marriage has begun and that the two parties have agreed to talk. Igbo marriage is not an individual affair and various issues must be discussed. So the mere fact that they exchanged kola-nut shows that some ground has already been covered. Nwokocha 1969 in an unpublished thesis on the kola-nut and the Eucharist says:

"For the suitor, the kola goes first to win the favour of the bride-to-be and her relatives, while the bride's father's presentation of the kola is a sign that the suitor and his companions are most welcome. In short the exchange of kola here expresses goodwill and friendly disposition on both sides and is a sign that the day's discussion would be most cordial."
(Nwokocha 1969:95).

But when the kola-nut is not presented or not shared the atmosphere is generally considered to be ominous. Chinua Achebe in his novel 'No Longer at Ease' emphasises the importance of Igbo traditional marriage. The young man Obi in the novel meets a beautiful girl Clara and falls in love with her only to discover later that she is 'osu'. Difficulties arise and Obi decides he must marry her. His friend and confidant Joseph questions Obi closely as to whether he will act according to native custom or in the 20th century way! 'Are you going to marry the English way or are you going to ask your people to approach her people according to custom?' (Achebe 1960:74-5). The implication of this question is of course whether Obi would allow his people a say in the marriage process and allow his father to present the kola-nut - a process which, if Obi accepted it, would kill the proposed marriage at the

beginning of the negotiations, thus confirming what Clara had told him: "I am an osu....so you see we cannot get married" (Achebe op cit 71).

We can now see that marriage is not tolerated between the osu and the freeborn because custom has laid down that it should not be. In other words, if the kola-nut is presented it will not be presented according to custom. We should therefore analyse the symbolism of the kola-nut for the Igbo - what it means for the Igbo within the context of marriage. (Basden has remarked that marriage is a most important event in the Igbo's life (Basden Among the Igbos:68). It is not something to be taken lightly. It is an expression of maturity - a responsibility which one accepts not only for himself but also on behalf of his own group and even of his own clan. Marriage is the avenue towards the creation of new life for it is an occasion to recruit women who will produce children to strengthen and replenish the group.

One can therefore argue that marriage means life for the group and without it, the social life and even the physical existence of the group would be severely threatened. If we relate this fact to the symbolism of the kola-nut we will begin to see the importance of it in marriage. The Igbo say "owetere oji, wetere ndu" (he who brings kola, brings life") (cfr Achebe 'Things Fall Apart' p.5 also Nwokocha 1969 p.89).

The refusal to share the symbol of life in the context of marriage means that the society rejects this particular union as a means to new life. This is a highly respected custom, the violation of which is thought to have terrible consequences. Achebe in the novel already referred to reveals what goes on in the mind of an anxious Igbo parent whose

son is about to exchange vows with a girl he loves when the girl happens to be an osu.

"I beg of you, my son, not to bring the mark of shame and leprosy into your family. If you do, your children and your children's children into the third and fourth generation will curse your memory" (Achebe 1963:33 cfr also Ojiako J.1966 p.84. Basden G.T. (ref to a girl f.n.)

Earlier on I suggested that a father in this situation will not lead his son to present the kola-nut to the family of a girl with this type of social stigma. For kola, in this context is a bridge, a symbolic representation of social equality and of unity - a signal for commensality - a representation of commonness of purpose. In normal marriage negotiations it means - 'we accept you as equal, give us women to procreate children and we recognise that we could also give a woman to a member of your group for the same purpose!

But the freeborn Igbo would not accept that he shares a common purpose with an osu in what most concerns him, the family. The reason for this lies in the nature of Igbo inheritance. Uchendu considers that Igbo lean heavily on the patrilineal side of descent for the purpose of inheritance (Uchendu V.C. 1965:64) while Ottenberg says that the Afikpo (still Igbo) are double unilineal (Ottenberg S. 1968) and Offonri describing the strength of Igbo clan feeling writes:

"Every Igbo man feels a sense of responsibility towards others from his own village or clan whether or not they are closely related. In towns like Lagos, Ibadan, Kaduna and Jos, it is usual to find an Igbo civil servant or merchant lodging and feeding as many as four or more jobless men whose only claim to his hospitality is that all belong to the same village or clan" (Offonri H. Kam 1951:467).

Sharing the kola-nut with an osu would amount to a tacit approval of the idea that women might be exchanged between the two groups. At the very best to share the kola would be to condone that a man might marry anyone he likes. It would mean that the meticulous care with which marriage is approached would disappear. In short it would mean that the osu would no longer be regarded as socially debased persons whose character and ancestry were uncertain (Achebe 'No Longer at Ease' p.82). Finally it would also mean that land, the valuable asset of the Igbo people, would pass on to the offspring resulting from intermarriage between a cult slave and a freeborn individual. Barry Floyd writes:

"In most Eastern Nigerian communities the land belonged as it still does in the last analysis to a group of kin, a family or a clan, the membership of which included not only the persons alive at any particular time, but persons dead, persons not yet born. Land was therefore more than tangible property; it expressed the social and spiritual identity of a group of kinsmen in contradistinction to other groups in other communities! (Barry Floyd 1969:199-200; see also L.T.Chubb 'Ibo Land Tenure 1961; Elias T.O. 1962; Obi S.N.C. 1963).

Thus it is not difficult to see that, if marriage became acceptable between the osu and the freeborn, it would result in a very considerable change in Igbo social structure. Also, although the Igbo may not be aware of this, the strong social sanctions which the Igbo impose on any attempt to have marriage relationships between osu and freeborn are attempts to guard against the creation of another distinct class similar to that which Oberg has observed among the Ankole of Uganda.

Oberg writes:

"On the other hand, however, Bahima men took concubines from among Bairu girls. These women had no status as married women and were usually described as servant girls. Bairu concubines were especially common among Bahima chiefs and gave rise to a class of half-castes known as Ambambari". (K. Oberg 1940:130).

Another step in our argument seems inescapable, given the fact that the Igbo marriage is generally exogamous. What conclusion should one draw from a situation where society simply says to a small group - 'Either you marry among yourselves or you do not marry at all'. This is what the Igbo says to the osu. The implication could be spelled out - 'The Igbo wish the osu to marry among themselves or die out. There is no doubt that this could happen. A hypothetical case which could be realized in time would be useful here. Take for example a situation where a man without a wife has voluntarily dedicated himself to serve a God, what would happen to him should he want to marry? The odds are that he would have to seek a wife among his own group or (in fact) die out.'

One may argue that he could marry from another group of osu elsewhere. This is possible provided there is such a group elsewhere. There have not been any statistics to show us the numerical strength of osu in Igboland. All that Basden tells us is that osu are widely spread in the areas of Owerri and Okigwi districts (Basden 1966:252). Leigh Ross suggests that osu form about three percent of the total Igbo population (Leigh Ross 1937:207). Given that the number of Igbo people ranges from five to seven million, the numerical strength of the osu would be anything between 21,000 and 35,000 souls.

However, I do not think this estimate helps us much. The general aversion of the Igbo to the osu suggests that the Igbo would rather see the osu die out than allow a change of attitude towards such an unprivileged class. Leith Ross writes:

"This same informant volunteered the statement that many osu were making great sacrifices to send their children to mission schools so that they, by adopting christianity, might escape from their osu-hood, though she added, they would be disappointed in this".
(Leith Ross 1937:219).

Uchendu makes the point that the eating of the kola-nut with a stranger or a guest takes place usually in three stages. They are: The Presentation, the Breaking and the Distribution of the kola-nut (Uchendu 1964:48).

The occasion for presenting the kola-nut according to this ritual is usually a formal one. The degree of formality is generally governed by the nature of the business in hand and the composition of the group. When kin groups are assembled together it is not necessary to go through the process outlined above. In fact they could meet without the use of the kola-nut. Thus, in Chinua Achebe's novel 'Arrow of God', when Akiebue, on a visit to his friend Ezeulu, was presented with a kola-nut, he retorted 'Must you worry about kola-nuts every time? I am not a stranger.' (Chinua Achebe 1964:116). The significance of this statement is that the kola-nut should be presented to a stranger. In Igbo society a stranger is defined by the nature of the occasion, unlike ancient Greek or Roman society when a stranger was defined as one who did not share the same culture. This is not so in Igbo society, where the term is relative rather than absolute.

The traditional Igbo man is not a travelled man - he is a man of very limited horizon. As Ottenberg puts it:

"For the average Igbo distant travel of any kind was undertaken only under unusual circumstances". (Ottenberg S.1958:206)

Leith Ross describing the Igbo says:

"Their compatriots living in another village area only a few miles away but unrelated by ties of kinship are considered as 'foreigners', all bearers of the worst possible characters and capable of the darkest crimes". (Leith Ross 1937:206).

This is why the Igbo view with suspicion anyone who has just arrived in their home. But if he speaks Igbo it is presumed that he will understand kola idiom, hence the procedure must be followed before any business is discussed.

Ottenberg's remark about Igbo social units is useful here.

He writes:

"Each unit was in certain ways and for certain purposes linked with nearby units and we can conceive of an Igbo country as a series of units interlocked for certain purposes but sometimes cut off from each other by warfare or disputes". (Ottenberg 1958:297).

The different units remain separate for practical purposes but are brought together, or at least the heads of the units are brought together, when certain problems arise:

"Clans do not meet for any common purpose other than when persons from two or more of them come together at some rites de passage or other ceremony, or to hear a dispute argued involving their members, frequently over land". (Ottenberg S. 1968:167).

Perhaps, what really makes a gathering of Igbo a meeting of strangers is not difference in culture but uncertainty as to the others' intentions. The people have come together for a specific purpose but neither the host nor the guests know what is in the other's mind. So the kola-nut is used by the host as a formal assurance to the guests that they are all welcome. Uchendu writes:

"Kola-nut features in all aspects of Igbo life. It is the symbol of Igbo hospitality. To be presented with a kola-nut is to be made welcome" (Uchendu 1964:48).

The same writer also cites another author, himself an Igbo:

"Among us, kola-nut is a highly valued and indispensable product. It commands our respect in a way no other product has done. Though it is one of the commonest vegetable products seen in Nigeria it represents, in our society, a vital social and religious element. Kola-nut is a symbol of friendship, the proper offering at meetings and religious occasions. Its presentation to a guest surpasses any other sign of hospitality which any host among us can show, even though in some places it costs only a penny". (Nzekwu 1961:67, cfr also Basden 1966:165).

What Basden says about the kola-nut for the Muslims could equally apply to the Igbo - "Kola-nuts enter into the daily life of all West African Mohammedans and constitute almost a language." (Basden 1966:165). One may call the kola-nut a symbolic language. It begins with the process of presenting the kola-nut.

One who presents the kola-nut sees himself and is seen by others as a responsible man - a mature man - and, what is more, a political man. His first act is to demonstrate that he is responsible and knows what he is about to do. All this is done symbolically as Basden notes:

"The owner (the host) first receives it (the kola-nut) from the slave attendant or one of his wives. He takes a nut and puts it to his lips, thus signifying that it is about to be offered in good faith. This symbolic offering proves it to be free from malice". (Basden 1966:162).

This is really the beginning of the commensal use of the kola-nut. What he has just done means "Please accept me as I am, I am one of you. You are safe in my house." Nwokocha puts this action very clearly :

"Here the kola for us represents that - call it supra-sensible, moral or psychological, social or religious - visible sign in which a man, as it were, incarnates his whole being - nay - his heart, stripped of hatred, rancour and all evil intentions, and which when offered to a fellow human being, invites the latter, in joy and unlimited love, to share with the host the seat of his very life - his heart - symbolically represented in the kola-what is the heart but the centre of a man's life? The Igbo knew this from time immemorial and this knowledge they have left as an evergreen testament to us, their beloved descendants, in this immortal adage: "Owetere oji, wetere ndu!" (He who brings kola brings life) (Nwokocha C. 1969:88-89).

This form of welcome is similar to that used by the Kono people of Sierra Leone. Parson writes:

"When the meal is finished, the guest asks the family to sit about to listen to his errand. He begins formally "N nz e famu" (I have come), to which the headman asks "A minin take i ya" (What has brought you?) implying some trouble at his home. If it is nothing serious he will quickly assure them by adding "I n-n" (No, no). Sometimes the family will insist upon knowing the truth and so they ask "A gbandi" (Is it hot?) which means that they suspect it to be a serious matter. If it is nothing serious the guest will say "Komi" (It is nothing). When, once they are certain that his visit is purely social and concerns no serious matter, the headman says "Boden" (Hang up your bag) and be at home. The guest replies "N na den" (I hang it up). If he actually carries a bag, he will then hang it up as a sign of his acceptance of their hospitality. The headman then will say "I knoa" (Be at rest). The guest is at rest. (Parson R.T. 1964:5)

So like the Kono the Igbo assures his guest that he is welcome by offering him kola-nut. This is a way of presenting or introducing one's relatives to strangers. So by means of the kola-nut the host symbolically introduces to the gathering his immediate senior male relative. Uchendu notes: "The host makes this presentation through the next ranking male in his compound or lineage segment". (Uchendu 1965:74) After this the one who is introduced, himself

introduces another. It is like a process of sectional linkage by which each unit of Igbo family is linked to the other. This is extremely important and goes to the very heart of the Igbo concept of relationship by patrilineal descent. It therefore follows that in this part of the formal presentation and mutual introduction of the people present, if the osu is represented he would discreetly withdraw for he is a man without relationship to the freeborn. This is probably what Basden means when he writes that the osu or the slave cannot eat kola-nut with the freeborn:

"At the same time, the stigma remains. There may be no open manifestation of slavery yet, underneath, the old ideas still persist. Today, many of the civilised, educated men will not share kola with a man of slave descent though in other respects he be a friend and an equal, or even superior in wealth and employment." (Basden G.T.1966:243).

Having presented the kola-nut and introduced it, the next stage in this very involved process is to have it broken. The interest lies not in the physical breaking of the kola-nut but its cultural meaning. Uchendu in one sentence says almost everything that needs to be said here. "All Igbo agree that it is the privilege of the host, who must be a (diala) (freeborn) to break the kola". This goes without saying because the process of introducing the kola has left the group composed only of freemen. Besides, as can be seen from the foregoing, it is not likely that osu will take the initiative to call on freeborn men in a formal way and present them with kola-nut.

The final stage in the whole process is the distribution of the kola-nut. Uchendu tells us that it follows a defined principle. He writes:

"The first share of the nut goes to the host who eats first to demonstrate that the nut is 'wholesome' and free from poison. The guest and his party are given their own share. Then each member of the host's party gets a share following the principle of seniority". Uchendu 1964:49).

This indicates that the host eats his own share of the kola-nut before any of his guests but of course he could not eat it before the ancestors are given their share. So a form of prayer must be said by the most senior among the host relatives:

"Creator of the universe, chew kola-nut,
our ancestral spirits, chew kola-nut.
He who brings kola-nut, brings life.
Wherever a child may be, may it wake
with each dawn. We will all live.
Forward jumps the male monkey. It
never jumps backwards.
IF A KITE AND AN EAGLE PERCH, WHICHEVER
SAYS THE OTHER SHOULD NOT PERCH, may its
wing break. Whatever one's occupation,
may it provide for his old age". (Uchendu 1964).

Once the ancestors have had their share everyone eats his own. The principle of lineal solidarity renders precaution against poisoning superfluous - no - one is likely to poison any member of his lineage, particularly his ancestors. So what takes place here is commensality not only among the living but also with the dead. It is a sign that everyone who has partaken of the nut is at least temporarily bound to observe 'quid pro quo' relationship as far as each other's safety and welfare are concerned. It does not bind them under any permanent set of obligations although this is desirable. Basden seems to share this interpretation when he writes: "Those who share the nut seal themselves by bond of friendship which as long as normal

conditions prevail, is not likely to be broken".

(Basden G.T. 1966:162)

From all the evidence it seems to me that the comparison which Nwokocha makes between the commensality involved in the kola-nut and that of blood brotherhood could be very misleading. For blood-brotherhood seals people unrelated by kinship into an everlasting union, the violation of which is thought to have adverse consequences, not only for the individual but also for his kinsfolk. The kola-nut has been shown not to have this sociological value but rather it is a means by which a person can welcome his visitors to a mixed gathering and introduce his next of kin and make his visitors feel that they are welcome.

On the other hand, the kola-nut does symbolises a kind of unity - not really a positive sort of unity but an absence of disunity which means that those who have partaken of the nut will not immediately plan to destroy the life or the property of the other. But there is no obligation that those who have partaken of the nut should come to each other's aid in a given situation.

Sharing the kola-nut can be represented as a sign of reciprocal peace among the Igbo. Those who share the nut, however, are not bound to respect one another's property, wife or life. In this, the unity expressed with the kola-nut falls short of the unity which is brought about by sharing salt among the Arabs.

Rev. Ilogu in a brief article 'Ofo: Religious and Political Symbol in Iboland' sheds further light on the aspect of unity which the presence of the kola-nut suggests:

"Soon after the disturbance in the Western House in 1962 Tai Solarin lamented in an article in the Daily Times about the sacrilege of using the mace in the House of Assembly as a fighting weapon. He thought that if the Yoruba used Oba Orangyan and the Igbo's used kola-nuts instead of the British initiated mace, perhaps greater respect would be accorded such symbols of authority and decorum. The correct thing the Igbos would use in the kind of situation is ofo and not kola-nut. The splitting and eating of kola-nuts symbolises authority and unity of purpose growing out of a common origin" (Ilogu E. 1964:235).

In this respect, the message of commensality is evident. Equality or unity is expressed in the implicit acceptance of peaceful co-existence - a reciprocal form of resolution symbolised by the concluding adage - Egbe Belu Ugo Belu (it is desirable that the eagle and the hawk should be accommodated on the same tree branch) - A saying which connotes peaceful co-existence between the rich and poor, the weak and the powerful.

The cultural symbolism of the kola-nut can be highlighted when it is understood that the Igbo generally share ordinary meals (excluding the kola-nut) with any one present irrespective of his cultural and social origin. Not to invite people present during the course of a meal is being regarded by the Igbo as a sign of uncouthness or want of proper education in Igbo social life.

"Eating and drinking are other forms of hospitality expected among neighbours and extended to visitors. Visitors and neighbours are expected and are formally invited to share meals with their hosts. For the Igbo this is not just mere courtesy, it is sincere. To refuse this hospitality is considered a grave insult. The host may feel that he has been snubbed or is suspected of sorcery. His wife leaves the guest or the neighbour in no doubt of her feelings. "Is it

because I cannot cook as delicious a meal as your wife or mother does?", is a typical remark. Even though a visitor has already eaten elsewhere, convention dictates - and good manners demand - that he at least taste his host's meal; only then can he plead "a full stomach" as a valid excuse from sharing the remainder of the repast (Uchendu 1965:73).

Michael Marioghae and John Ferguson in their book 'Nigeria Under the Cross' have demonstrated the importance of hospitality in the social life of Nigerians. There, they argued that hospitality is one area of social life which contrasts very well with the social life in Europe:

"Throughout the country there are closely similar social traditions, which remind us of what people in Europe have lost. The universal welcome to strangers and the glowing hospitality are heart warming. One of us went with a Nigerian to visit his home village, and came back loaded down with gifts, which it would have been discourteous to refuse - eggs and chickens, snails and tortoise, dried fish and dried meat, beer and stout, vegetable dishes, locally made pottery and even money - often coming from people who were quite poor, but glad to share what they had" (Marioghae M. and Ferguson J. 1965:4)

Both the slave and the freeborn Igbo could share meals together (see Dr. Baikie, footnote 2 in Notes to chapter X in Basden 1966:166; see also Basden G.T. (Niger Ibos 243)). Since everyone could share meals together, the importance of the kola-nut as a boundary marker becomes most significant. It becomes the only food which could divide off the freeborn from the slave and establish the identity of each man in a mixed gathering. It is also the only food among the Igbo whose presence or absence has a symbolic message. This may have been the reason why Nzekwe has written:

"On informal occasions a host apologises for not presenting his guest with kola-nut. On more formal occasions he may entertain his guest lavishly. The guest may enjoy immensely his host's hospitality and thank him profusely for it. But, because he has not presented him with a kola-nut, when the day of reckoning comes the guest denounces in no uncertain terms his host's inability to present him with a kola-nut - very cheap, very common yet most significant and therefore most important." (Nzekwu 1961:68).

CHAPTER IVTHE PLACE OF COMMENSALITY IN HINDU INDIA

Anthropologists who have written on the caste hierarchy in India have expressed the view that within the caste system some form of social mobility is possible. (Mayer A.C. 1956;1965; Marriott M.1965;Dube 1956). And Srinivas has described how this mobility could take place:

"It could be said that in the case of the numerous castes occupying the lowest levels Brahminical customs reached them in a chain reaction - that is, each group took from the one higher to it, and in turn gave to the group below (Srinivas M.N. 1956:483)."

This process is certainly a true form of social mobility (cfr.Runiciman 1969:47; Aron R.1969:69) and Srinivas adds further light in the matter when he writes:

"Normally sanskritization enables a caste to obtain a higher position in the hierarchy". (Srinivas 1956:482).

The one major problem that crops up in such a situation is how to describe or explain the nature of social mobility if the Brahmins remain immovable at the top (Weber 1948:397; Mayer 1956; Marriott M. 1959:93) and the untouchable's position is immutable (Harper E.B.1964:190). It is this problem that this chapter is concerned. In other words, this chapter will evaluate whether through one aspect of sanskritization, namely food, a structurally lower caste would eventually come to exchange cooked food with a caste above it. This is the same as asking whether a commensal group which is the same as a status group in a caste system could gain commensal affiliation through change in status.

Hinduism is a religion of hierarchy. It recognises hierarchy of castes, hierarchy of occupations and even hierarchy of food. The statistics on the next page are a clear demonstration of the existence and the applicability

of two of those hierarchies, namely - caste and food.

The Table shows inter-caste commensal relations in Asalpur. The numbers given below show the serial numbers of the castes from which kaccha or pocca food, water and chilam or hookah can be accepted.

S. No.	Caste.	Kaccha food	Pukka food	Water	Hookah or Chilam
High-rung clean castes (Brahmins)					
1.	Gaud	1-5	1-17	1-17	1-18
2.	Dadhich	1-5	1-17	1-17	1-18
3.	Khandelwal	1-5	1-17	1-17	1-18
4.	Saraswat	1-5	1-17	1-17	1-18
5.	Parek	1-5	1-17	1-17	1-18
Middle-rung clean castes					
6.	Baniya	1-6	1-17	1-18	1-18
7.	Khati	1-7	1-18	1-18	1-18
8.	Soni	1-18	1-18	1-18	1-18
Low-rung clean castes					
9.	Goswami	1-18	1-18	1-19	1-19
10.	Badeva	1-19	1-19	1-19	1-19
11.	Jat	1-19	1-19	1-19	1-19
12.	Gujar	1-19	1-19	1-19	1-19
13.	Kumavat	1-19	1-19	1-19	1-19
14.	Mina	1-19	1-19	1-19	1-19
15.	Daroga	1-19	1-19	1-19	1-19
16.	Kumhar	1-19	1-19	1-19	1-19
17.	Lakhera	1-19	1-19	1-19	1-19
18.	Jogi	1-19	1-19	1-19	1-19
19.	Nai	1-19	1-19	1-19	1-19
Untouchable castes					
20.	Balai	1-20	1-20	1-20	1-20
21.	Raigar	1-19,21	1-19,21	1-19,21	1-19,21
22.	Guvaray	1-19,22	1-19,22	1-19,22	1-19,22
23.	Dhobi	1-19,23	1-19,23	1-19,23	1-19,23
24.	Nat	1-20,24	1-20,24	1-19,24	1-19,24
25.	Bhangi	1-25	1-25	1-25	1-25

(Srivastava 1970:273)

The principle underlying the statistics is the Hindu belief that each caste has a certain quality of ritual purity which is lessened or polluted by certain commensal contacts with castes having an inferior quality (Mayer 1956: 120: cfr also Stevenson 1954:46 Hutton 1946:155; Srinivas 1952:26). But it does not tell us also that in some occasions

a high caste man such as a Brahmin could be defiled simply because he has eaten the food which a low caste man has seen. (Ghurye 1950:187).

A group whose members could exchange the various items listed in the statistics without fear of defilement is really a true commensal group.

It is commensality more than any other concept that provides a basis for understanding the separateness and distinctness that exist in the caste system. In India, commensality does not have the moral force which the act of mutual exchange of food exercises among the Arabs. For there, as is clear in the introduction, commensality binds even two unknown persons to a union. Nor is eating together a means of recognising kinship of blood as the Lugbara of Uganda do. In India, one cannot be admitted to another caste group by an act of eating. (Mayer 1965:26, Berreman 1965:40; Srinivas 1952:267). Commensality in India verifies one aspect of the implication of the formal sharing of the kola-nut among the Igbo. This is why some writers may regard the India type of commensality as negative depending of course on which side of the coin one is observing. Richards (1932:174) distinguishes between negative and positive aspects of commensality.

But Hindu commensal terms are on different levels from what we have seen already. Commensality is the heaviest separating and divisive block between castes. It retains both inclusive and exclusive quality forming a barrier even more difficult to break than the prohibition on marriage. As an exclusive group a commensal group may differ from a caste group.

Mayer writes:

"Commensal rules usually apply between whole castes; but sometimes different sub-castes in a single caste will have different rules of behaviour towards some other castes (Mayer 1965:36; Gough, K.E., in the article 'Cult of the Dead Among the Mayars': Harper, E.B. 1964; Stevenson 1954:61-62).

Commensality is stronger than marriage as a separating force in that Hinduism recognises hypergamy. Srinivas writes:

"Hypergamous unions occasionally occur between castes. By this a man belonging to a higher caste takes the girl from the lower caste. It is never the other way round" (Srinivas 1952:271, Weber 1948:401, Gough, E.C., Op.Cit. 447, Mayer 1965:244 ff.)

A commensal group is not a corporate group in the sense that members inhabit one territory and own a number of things in common. It does not exclude this, but a commensal group is primarily a group of people who recognise their social equality based on their mutual recognition of an equal degree of ritual purity which makes it possible for them to exchange cooked food without fear of defilement.

Caste endogamy provides only some degree of separateness between castes. But commensality defines the separateness and the degree of social distance between different caste groups in the village interactional pattern. It is very precise in its definition and provides an answer even in the most doubtful cases. Broken lines are used where doubts as to the relative rank of the caste exists. As well as this, the commensal group within the traditional Indian village unit is also a functional group (cfr. Rudra Datt Singh 1956: 137; Weber 1948:398; Srinivas 1952:269; also 1955a). If this is so, one would like to know whether and in what way it is also an interest group.

In so far as a commensal group is also an occupational group, one may tend to classify it as an interest group. It would then maintain its occupation and protect its rights against any unlawful intrusion into it.

Srinivas writes:

"The members of a sub-caste tend to regard their traditional occupation as the natural one to them. Taking up an other occupation is regarded as improper. There is a pride in the skill required for the practice of the traditional occupation, and this skill is a secret which is not easily divulged to members of other castes." (Srinivas 1952:270).

But even though a commensal group may also happen to be an occupational and hence an interest group in some specialised fields (Because all castes are free to practise agriculture), I do not consider it useful to pursue this line of argument any further. It now remains to return to the central theme, that is whether a commensal group could affect status affiliation to another commensal group by a change in ritual status.

Let us base our discussion on a hypothetical Indian village X with five different caste groups - A,B,C,D,E. Let us assume also that these village caste groups interact on the scale such as the village described by Harper (see Harper 1964). Now if the caste E wants to rise in the village hierarchy it would begin by changing some of its eating habits (Bailey 1957:189) e.g. alcohol (see Stevenson 1954:62) or ban beef eating as the case may be.

It should be borne in mind that there is no generally laid pattern on an all Indian scale as to how a caste should begin to change its status. This is because the amount of variation in the Indian eating habits is considerable.

In some places the Brahmins ate meat (Marriott M.1959:97;

Mayer 1956:120). This agrees with the remark which Kathleen Gough made:

"In spite of the higher ritual value normally accorded to vegetarians, we find that some meat eaters in fact outrank some vegetarians" (Aberle K.G. 1959:115).

If this is the case what Mayer suggests becomes a better criterion. He writes:

"The manifestation of different caste status lies in the activities in which the castes engage rather than in any symbol." (Mayer 1956:120).

The procedure in the attempt to change status must, therefore, depend on the village habits. So the amount of change would depend on what the general opinion considers low on the village pattern. Now let us analyse the problem step by step according to some other cases we have met. What would happen to the group E if it decides to go on with status alteration. Assuming that not all the members of the group favoured the change, then the group would have lost in commensal strength. (see Cohn 1955:74).

If on the other hand the caste group E 'en bloc' accepts to change, one wonders whether this would immediately dispose the next immediate caste group D. to share food on the principle of equality with E. Were this to happen we would not be studying caste as we know it to-day. (see Srinivas 1952:268). But before this stage is reached the whole castes in the village would have observed that E. has altered its status. The most likely outcome is that all the castes D,C,B,A, would likewise be affected and this would alter in some way some of the things they would consider polluting. (see Srinivas 1955+6:482). So Caste E, would have gained in self-respect, but not in commensal partners I would like to suggest that this overall process of sanskritization beginning from below would account for the different commensal....

groups even at the top level of society. By the time they (the low castes) reach their destination (of sanskritization), however, they will discover that the Brahmin himself has vacated the spot and moved on to the higher hill of sanskritization where he still gazes from an elevated pitch. (Gould 1961:949 cited by Lynch 1968:210). Stevenson cites Ketkar (1909:81) who shows eight hundred Brahmin sub-castes whose ritual status is relative according to local pattern (Stevenson 1954:48).

On the strength of what we have seen, one cannot suppose that change in the eating habits is sufficient to account for a rise in status in the hierarchy. Some other factors must account for it. Srinivas, for example, has observed that in the Mysore village there are five rank levels among castes, all of whom have the same dietary rules, and all of whom practise occupations of appropriate equal pollution (Marriott M. 1959:95). Also Bailey (1955) has shown that in Bisipara, the Orisan village which has twenty-one castes, the Brahmins kill and eat goats.

Assuming that some action is needed to attract the attention of the village in order to demonstrate to the villagers a wish to acquire new status, let us postulate that the next change is that of occupation. We must recall that we are basing our analysis on a caste group that interacts with other caste groups - a caste group whose existence is dependent on mutual services - a kind of functional interdependence. Weber writes:

"A caste may comprise of people who follow very different pursuits; at least this is the case to-day, and for certain upper castes this has been the case since very early times. Yet so long as the caste has not lost its character, the kinds of pursuits admissible without loss of caste are always

in some way quite strictly limited. Even to-day very often 'caste' and 'way' of earning a living are so firmly linked that a change of occupation is correlated with a division of caste. (Weber 1948:398; see also Rudra Datt Singh 1956:13; Srinivas 1955a Man)!"

Assuming that it is the same caste E. at the bottom of the society which wants to change its status, it would then change its occupation. The meaning of this pursuit on the village level is a refusal to carry out its traditional obligation to the village, a measure that is not likely to endear the E. group to the rest of the community, and instead of attracting commensal partners, the members are likely to receive some reprisals for failure in duty. This is what happened to the Camars of Madhopur. Previously this group was regarded as low, because of their habits. Change of diet did not gain for them their desired status. They followed this up with a particular change in their traditional service to their overlords. Because of their failure to fulfil the obligation to their Thakurs, they were driven out of the village. When they came back all they had achieved was self-respect, not commensal partners (see Cohn 1955:73).

The third stage in the process of acquiring new ritual status within the hierarchy is what I would describe as staking the claim to a higher status. It is really a demonstration in practical terms that a group wants to change and is prepared to fight for it. One could change one's diet and even one's occupation, but if the desired status is not inserted within the structure of the existing hierarchy the change could hardly be worthwhile.

Bailey writes:

"But the status must need be publicised not only by overt action against supposed backsliders within ones own caste, but also by asserting superiority over other castes, and directly by demonstrating the inferiority of caste groups within ones own village whom formally one acknowledged to have been ritually superior.(Bailey 1957:189 Mayer 1965:48).

This is a risky political gamble which would cause the claimant a lot of difficulty. Cohn (1955) reports five different cases where commensal groups who asserted some degree of superiority were beaten down. Srinivas (1955-6) also reports how the Smiths in Mysore have earned perpetual hatred because they have claimed status which they did not merit (Srinivas 1955-6).

Neither a change in diet nor in occupation by itself would produce the social mobility desired. It must depend on another factor - namely that of public opinion. It is this that decides the relative caste status in the hierarchy.

Marriott writes:

"Since caste ranking is here taken to exist in collective community sentiment, any elaboration of caste ranking must depend upon a high degree of consensus or agreement among the members of a community as to the standing of each caste.(Marriott M.1965:8).

Thus the traditional division of caste into varna becomes redundant on the village level (see Stevenson 1954:48-9, Srinivas 1952:25). But even in the village setting the existence of a hierarchy is blurred by the situation which allows different castes to carry out an independent evaluation of their own image.

Some illustrations may be useful here. For instance, the commensal group A. could exchange food with B. B could exchange food with C. But there is no guarantee that A may

exchange food with C. This point is well illustrated by Blunt in the citation quoted by Stevenson:

"X and Y are two Hindus, the former a Brahmin and the latter a middle class trader. X may eat as the guest of Y, if the food is cooked and served by a person of suitably high ritual status, for example a Brahmin cook, even though X would not eat food cooked by Y himself. (Stevenson 1954:54).

Mayer makes exactly the same point and spells out implication of the citation quoted above:

"The position of a caste on the commensal hierarchy can be assessed on the principle that eating the food cooked or served by another caste denotes equality with it, or inferiority, and that not to eat denotes equality or superiority. Those castes which are most exclusive eat from nobody else, and the lowest eat from nearly everyone. In practice, however, the hierarchy is not so simply composed. Take for example two castes which do not eat from one another. In principle they are equal, but a third caste will eat from one of them and not from the other, thus putting the former caste higher in terms of the general picture. In such ways one can infer the relative ranks of two castes; but such cases show that there is a certain ambiguity in the hierarchy. (Mayer 1965:34 cfr. Beteille, A 1965:291).

One may be tempted to conclude that any attempt to classify the status of castes on the village level is fraught with difficulty. Perhaps Harper was considering this when he wrote:

"Castes are difficult to rank even by occupational criterion. Although Goldsmiths are placed above Blacksmiths because it is said gold is more pure than iron. Several Sudra castes which follow the same occupation - paddy farming - are ranked differently, in part according to the type of ceremonial relations they have with Haviks. (Harper E.B.1964:151).

The statistics below show us that even though a community may be aware of the existence of a hierarchy, it may be difficult for them to locate precisely the position of each commensal group on the hierarchy.

TABLE I
 CONSENSUS AND DISSENSUS ON CASTE RANKING AS AFFECTED BY RESIDENCE
 AND BY SERVING
 CONNECTIONS IN TWO VILLAGES OF UTTAR PRADESH

Village	Number of	Castes Locally Resident				Neighbouring or connected Castes				Non Neighbouring and All Rated Castes Unconnected Castes			
		Mean of Raters (Opinions)	N.	Average Deviations		Mean of Average Deviations	N.			Mean of Average Deviations	N.	Mean of Average Deviations	N.
(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)	(5)	(6)	(7)	(8)	(9)	(10)	(11)	(12)	(13)	(14)
Kishan Garhi	14	24	2.2	1.04	6	2.9	.81	6	6.2	2.16	36	2.9	102
Ram Nagla	8	7	2.6	1.31	21	3.4	1.65	8	4.4	2.01	36	3.5	.64
Both Villages	22	31	2.3	1.06	27	3.3	1.61	14	5.2	2.66	72	3.2	2.03

(Marriott M. 1965:15)

The line of argument we have advanced so far seems to imply that a rise in status through sanskritising food rules is only a gain in self-respect rather than in objective social rank. This may be true. But it does not mean that there is no case of a rise in status involving also the acquisition of new commensal partners.

David Pocock provides a case where a caste previously reckoned to be of low status rose to exchange food on equal terms with its traditional superior. The caste in question is the Patidar caste of Gujerat in North-West India, traditionally an agricultural caste. Originally the members went by the name of Kaibis, then recognised as Sudras despite their claim to be warriors. Peace and prosperity as well as the coming of the British to that part of India were their chief instruments to a rise in status beyond their original one. (David Pocock 1955:71). When the British came, they cleverly manipulated their social environment and became extremely wealthy. In 1931, the Kaibis formally insisted on changing their name to Patidar.

"To-day the Patidar rank equally with the Bania caste under the Brahmins in terms of caste purity..... the two castes may, when occasions arise, interchange food."
(David Pocock 1955:71).

I think it is necessary to state at this stage that a rise in status may not be explained by a change in food alone. It is a very involved process requiring various human factors to account for the rise. Change in diet as well as in occupation are important in that they demonstrate to everyone how low a group is in the existing pattern. But without the additional factor, namely wealth (cfr. Mayer 1965:49; Beteille 1969:290; Marriott 1965:20) a rise in

status could hardly be successfully contemplated.

This calls for the consideration of the way in which external factors have altered the commensal conceptions of Hindu India.

This raises the question as to what extent the rules of commensality in traditional India have been modified by India's contact with the West. The British who colonized India did not go there to change the existing social structure.

(Bernard Cohn 1968:1, Ghurye 1950:175). Naturally as rulers of India, they rank politically higher than the Brahmins, a position which the Brahmins found difficult to accept because the colonial masters ate meat and drank alcohol which were taboo to the Brahmins. Eventually, however, the Brahmins were compelled to emulate the British.

Unlike the Hindu traditional law, which acknowledged differences of rank in the caste system, the British law recognised equality of all subjects irrespective of caste. (Srinivas 1968:192). This new attitude would have explained partly why even before independence a number of movements had arisen which aimed at breaking the barrier between castes (see Ghurye 1950:178-179). Neither the movements nor the indirect effect of colonial influence could convince Hindus that the existing caste relationship was unhealthy for the new society. Strict maintenance of ritual purity was still considered absolutely essential.

One would have thought that with the introduction of liberal education into India a change was bound to come. But up to the beginning of this century especially in the Madras area (Ghurye 1950:167) there was still a struggle to keep the school children from different castes separate. Cases of lower caste children receiving their education outside the

school room (Ghurye 1950:166) were well known. This was meant to protect the children from ritual pollution for the law had stipulated the distances that must be maintained between certain castes. Srinivas cites Hutton who quoted Aiyappan with regard to the distances that should be observed:

"A Nayar must keep seven feet from a Nambudri Brahmin, an Iravan (Ilavan, Izhuvan, Tiyan) must keep thirty-two, a Cheruman sixty-four and a Nayadi seventy-four to one hundred and twenty-four".

To-day children can sit together in schools irrespective of class origin, Ishwaran writes:

"Thirdly children of different castes mix under such auspices as the new school. Here again there is no essential change. Children may sit in the same class, but they do not eat or drink what is touched by children of other castes and when they go home, they take a ritual wash". (Ishwaran 1966:115).

Ishwaran considers the new change as non-essential. In one way he may be right. But when one considers the segregation that used to be practised between castes (Srinivas 1955:482) the abolition of spatial segregation becomes significant. The fact that children could learn together is a move forward towards establishing some form of commensality.

The importance of this measure could also be felt in the general life of Hindu system.

The new cities with the introduction of hotels (Ghurye 1950:186) have added a new dimension to the rules of commensality. The abolition of spatial segregation, because of the exigencies of living, had meant that different castes could eat even in the same straight line without objections being raised. (Mayer 1965:50-55), Ghurye 1950:187). The transport system has also played its part. Ishwaran could

be considered right in one direction. The obvious question that comes to mind is the role of education in Hindu India. Bose has described it thus:

"Education is one of the most significant instruments for the equalization of opportunities, for development and for the removal of the social and economic disabilities of the scheduled class" (Bose 1970:209. cfr. also Lynch O. 1968:216).

The Indian system of education, at least originally, does not seem to have been designed for breaking barriers between castes. It was education for a job, aimed to earn a living. As Srinivas writes:

"However for an Indian, to take advantage of the better paid job and more prestigious occupation, English education was indispensable." (Srinivas 1961:193).

Consequently this form of education could withdraw one from one's traditional occupation without separating one from one's caste. (There could be some exceptions). S.M. Dubey's analysis of a hundred white coloar workers seems to suggest that in fact this is true (Excerpts):

"In the survey all respondents belong to the income group ranging from RS80 to RS300 per month. Salary is the only source of income for 80% respondents and 20% families of these respondents have more than one avenue of income.. increase in education and urbanization are mainly responsible for occupational change. 83% respondents have come to the city from villages and only 17% are original inhabitants of the city....it is interesting that although the respondents have migrated to the city, yet they have not lost contact with the village..... in spite of liberal education and the impact of city life....those respondents are not free from the traditional pattern of thinking and conservatism. A majority of them are opposed to inter-caste marriage. Only 2% respondents may leave their religion, 2% their castes and 16% of them are prepared to leave their occupation; if they are assured of a better standard of life and prosperity. (S.M. Dubey 1965:244:246)."

The most important point I want to emphasise in this chapter is that the Indian commensal group pattern persists

throughout time. Even when a caste group acquires higher status as did the Patidar caste of Gujerat, the group did not thereby lose its identity by merging with another group thus becoming a wider commensal group. Also urban influence has not been found to exert much change in the village way of life (see Mayer 1965:50; Ishwaran 1960:12). The reason for this rigidity in the caste system despite the influence of westernization appears to be rooted in the economic system of India.

Economically India has not experienced changes replacing the traditional occupational structure, by one resembling those of the more advanced industrial societies. Urban life is still linked to those of the village by the influence of the country dwellers by kinship and by the survival of a considerable number of pre-industrial patterns of city life. In short the commensal pattern of life in India has remained rigid despite a process of change (see Dubey S.M.1965:240; Myrdal 1965:106,117; Beterille A.1965:286(adapted)).

The reason for this rigidity in the commensal pattern does not appear to stem from the inherent nature of the caste as such. The pattern has stayed mainly because the values it protects have not changed. The caste system gives to a person a sense of belonging. A western educated person is compelled to respect the system because it gives him a feeling of identity and a feeling of security. Moreover, India is still an agricultural country. The statistics overleaf show the proportion of people who are engaged in industry.

WORKING POPULATIONDistribution of Working Force by Industries In the
Indian Union

(Figures in 000)

	1950-51	1949-50	1948-49
1. Agriculture and animal husbandry	102,711	101,135	99,591
2. Forestry	350	349	348
3. Fishery	579	578	577
4. Total	103,640	102,062	100,516
5. Mining	780	778	777
6. Factory establishments	2,969	3,070	3,065
7. Small Enterprise	11,521	11,323	11,230
8. Total	15,270	15,171	15,072
9. Communications	195	175	169
10. Railways	1,178	1,181	1,192
11. Banks and Insurance	147	147	147
12. Other Commerce and Transport	9,533	9,437	9,343
13. Total	11,053	10,940	10,851
14. Professions and liberal arts	6,425	6,191	6,016
15. Government Administration	3,886	3,765	3,597
16. Domestic Service	2,947	2,847	2,751
17. House Property	-	-	-
18. Total	13,258	12,803	12,364
19. Total Working Force	143,221	140,976	138,803

(Ref: Indian Trade and Industry Vol.V April 9th 1954:404)

The table is prepared on the basis of 1951 and 1941 census data supplemented by currently available statistics relating to employment in a number of industrial sectors.

It may be seen that about 72 per cent of the working population are engaged in agriculture and allied activities, while about 11 per cent are engaged in mining and industries. The remaining 17 per cent are engaged in the tertiary enterprises.

Such a degree of industrialization is obviously insufficient to influence people against the traditional system, rooted as it is in agriculture. I would, therefore, like to suggest that when India is fully industrialized, the utility of the commensal pattern will disappear and with it caste restrictions.

For the moment the joint family and the sub-caste can adapt themselves to modern forms of political life (cfr. Bailey *Stratagemas* and *Spoils* pp 164 ft and E.R. Leach, *Aspects of Caste* 6-7). It is, therefore, easy to see why of the two society models available to India the caste system has far greater influence than the western egalitarian ideal.

CHAPTER V

WHEN COMMUNION IS A THREAT TO AUTHORITY

The central problem in this chapter is to discover how utraquism - the movement for communion under the species of Bread and Wine - in 15th Century Bohemia came to pose a threat to the authority of the Church.

Since communion is the key word in this chapter, it is extremely important to outline the different senses in which it is used in ecclesiastical writings. The general sense of communion is sharing, or participating in something; often it means a body of people professing one faith (Oxford Dictionary definition). According to William Frazer, communion signifies an autonomous independent Church. Referring to the discussion between the Anglican and the orthodox churches of the East, he writes:

"Our aim is to establish such relations between the two communions as shall enable the laity and clergy of either to join in the sacraments and offices of the others without forfeiting the communion of their own church." (Frazer William 1874:1).

Another usage is:

"An article of faith which has been explicit in the Apostles' Creed since the 15th Century... it is based on the New Testament conception of community which connotes fellowship in the faith at the celebration of the Eucharist of each member with all and all with Christ... Hence the communion of saints also signifies union with the dead who have gone before us and with the angels." (Rhaner, 1965:96).

Though this chapter will refer to communion both in the sense of a body of believers and a union of all the elect, the central issue is communion as a meal - a sacred meal which is the re-enactment of what Christ did at the Last Supper (see Lk.29:19 ff; Mk.14:22; 1 Cor.11:23 f; D.698:844;997). Holy Communion is a 'fraternizing' meal because when people are gathered together for the act, there should be no rancour, no

hatred in the hearts of the participants (Mt.5:23; 1 Cor.11:29). It is an inclusive meal. The only condition for participating is baptism (Mt.28:18-20). It is a true form of commensality transcending boundaries of families, ethnic groups, castes and countries (cf.Morris West,1969:33). Races and nations are brought together under this simple act. Ratzinger writes:

"Men from all nations and from all social ranks gather without distinctions at one and the same table, partake of one and the same bread, and any believer from anywhere can gather at this table to which he is always and everywhere invited, in any Catholic Church throughout the world". (Ratzinger J. in 'Man before God' 122 cited by Nwokocha C.1969:236).

In a very similar vein but approaching the sharing of Holy Communion from a structural point of view, Sheen writes:

"The communion rail admits no fundamental difference; there the employer must take the paten from the employee, the professor must eat the same bread as the student and the Greek must be nourished from the same tabernacle as the Barbarian for all are one Body, because they eat the same Bread." (Sheen F.J. 1935:367-8; cf.also Chrysostom J. Homily 24 on 1 Cor. cf.P.G.61,199 cited by Nwokocha C.1969:217).

Thus the sharing of Holy Communion becomes an expression of a common bond. All those who share the meal become one ritual commensal group.

The partaking of Holy Communion has various effects outside the communion table. The communion table is only the sign of the fraternal, friendly relationship which should exist between communications. St. Paul even felt that members of the same communion should not have recourse to law courts where they would be tried by heathens (1 Cor:1-9). Communion also imposes the duty of mutual assistance where the needs are thought to be greatest (2 Cor.8:4-6). This need is felt especially when one is undertaking a journey (Rom. 16:1-4).

But travelling creates some problems. Some means must be adopted by which genuine Christians must be known. This problem was overcome to some degree by the use of letters. Letter writing became the means by which bishops expressed communion or commensality. Elert Werner makes an important contribution in this matter. In chapter twelve of his book, 'Eucharist and Church Fellowship in the First Four Centuries', he refers to several cases where letter writing is used to demonstrate the existence of commensality - to show that two church leaders profess the same faith and therefore are entitled to exchange Holy Communion. Among the several cases he cited, this one is extremely relevant in the present context. It is the case involving the deposed Bishop Paul of Samosata. Despite his deposition, Bishop Paul refused to quit the ecclesiastical grounds, especially the church. His opponents subsequently appealed to the Emperor Aurelian.

"The Emperor's decision was to give the building to those with whom the Bishops exchange letters." (Elert W.1966:150 cfr.H.E.VII,30,19 Stevenson P.286).

Such a decision would most certainly have persuaded any ecclesiastical leaders of the need to exchange letters with their fellow bishops in order to establish their orthodoxy. Rome acquired its primacy among other sees by asserting itself as the defender of orthodoxy. The basis for this assertion was the belief that St. Peter had his see there. Constantinople, Alexandria, Antioch and Jerusalem were all important but Rome held the primacy of honour. St. Cyril of Jerusalem (died 386) called Peter, the Prince of the Apostles and Supreme Herald of the Church (Fortescue,1929:52). The Fathers of Chalcedon cried out when St. Leo's letter was read out to them:

"Peter has spoken by Leo."(Fortescue,1929:54).

St. Basil in his letter to Pope Damasus tells him:

"The only remedy we can see for these evils is a visitation from your mercy." (Ep.70 ad Dam.P.G.xxxii.434 Fortescue,1929:55).

The recognition of the Primacy of the Roman See by the whole Church continued up to the 8th Century. The Empress Irene (Regent for her son, Constantine VI 797-802) and the Patriarch of Constantinople, Tarsius (784-806) both wrote in the first place to Pope Adrian I (772-795) about summoning a general council. Adrian answered in two long letters:

"He rejoices at their orthodox dispositions and at their wish to put an end to the heresy that has long cut them off from the communion of the Roman See." (Fortescue,1929:80).

Already a number of heresies had created division and therefore a split in communion in the primitive Church. In 431, Nestorius was condemned for the doctrine that would thereafter bear his name, Nestorianism. This removed the East Syrian Church from communion with the whole Church. Twenty years later, 451, another doctrinal difference created monophysitism, taking with it the Church of Armenia, Syria (Jacobites), Egypt (Coptic Church), Ethiopia and India. The big split between East and West did not occur until 1051 when the traditional church was officially split between East and West - the East becoming an autonomous independent church but accepting commensality (Note: There are Roman Catholic churches in the East who accept the authority of Rome) while the West became one united body recognising the authority of the Bishop of Rome. Those churches which accepted Rome's interpretation of doctrine, Rome recognised as being in communion with her; those which disagreed on matters of doctrine, Rome regarded as not being in communion - thus implicitly suggesting that the basis of commensality for all Christians is not the common acceptance of our Lord Jesus Christ as God and Saviour,

(Leeming B.1963:6), but rather agreement on less fundamental issues of doctrine.

With the split of the Church into East and West, the West or the Latin Church continued to develop along the lines of the Roman kings and emperors, accumulating wealth, power and glory as the years rolled by. There is no need to outline the process of this development. This will become clear when the techniques with which the advocates of Holy Communion under both kinds mowed down the authority of the Church are analysed. What is important is to discern the height of the papal powers in the 15th Century. The contrast between the Primitive Church and the Church in the Middle Ages will become evident. I should, however, like to throw some light on the nature of the papal powers in that period and I think the quotation below provides a good illustration. It is an account of the words of excommunication which Pope St. Gregory VII issued against King Henry, King of the Germans:

"Wherefore, relying upon this commission, and for the honour and defence of thy church, in the name of Almighty God, Father, Son and Holy Spirit, through thy power and authority, I deprive King Henry, son of the Emperor Henry, who has rebelled against thy church with unheard of audacity, of the government over the whole kingdom of Germany and Italy, and I release all Christian men from the allegiance which they have sworn, or may swear to him and I forbid any one to serve him as king. For it is fitting that he who seeks to diminish the glory of thy church should lose the glory which he seems to have. (Emerton E.1932:91 cfr. also Watt J.1965:75-144 cf. Matthew Spinka 1966:329).

The cardinals and bishops were equally at the disposal of the Pope (Spinka, 1965:64).

The excommunication threats and the dispensation of the subjects of the king from their obligation to obey him marks the zenith of papal powers. This is the background against which it would be relevant to view the threat provided by the

movement in Bohemia in the 15th Century. Communion under both kinds was a concrete localised movement which had for its purpose the reform of the church (Betts, 1947:4; Kaminsky reflects on whether it should be described as a revolution instead of a reform) because it saw the Church as having moved away from the spirit of the primitive Church and indeed from the spirit of Christ.

Petrie (1662:531) attributes the origin of the movement to Peter of Dresden, who returned to Prague early in the 15th Century and asked:

"I wonder that you do not perceive the error of the Eucharist, which hath been for so long in the church, for communion is given unto the people under one kind, whereas Christ hath commanded to give both bread and wine".

There is not sufficient material to suggest positively that Peter of Dresden introduced the struggle of communion under both kinds in Bohemia. Nor is this important for our purpose here. What I think is important is to indicate in what ways the movement was successful. One of the ways I think this could be done is to examine the decrees of the council of Constance in 1415, which condemned Holy Communion under both kinds, and consider what happened nearly twenty years later at the council of Basel in 1433:

"As the result of these negotiations, the council granted, on November 30 1433, the compacts of Prague, consisting of four articles: the communion under both kinds of bread and wine, the free preaching of the word of God the punishment of mortal sins, of the clergy by the ecclesiastical, of laymen by civil authorities, and finally the prohibition of ruling over secular matters by priests and monks and their excessive acquiring of property." (Spinka M.1965:71; Shofield A.N.E.1964:314; Jacob E.F.1969:83).

The reasons for the success of the movement during this period can be seen in the techniques with which the movement

for communion under both kinds weakened the authority of the church. In 1415, the council of Constance condemned and burnt John Hus for the heresy which came to be associated with the demand for Holy Communion under both kinds for the laity, (Spinka M.1966:354; Kaminsky H. 1967:108 f. Petrie 1662:531. cf. also Hardt III, 624 in the Apologia). The supporters of John Hus came to be identified with the cause for communion under both kinds; hence the movement became known also as Hussitism (Kavka,1960:843). (Communion under both kinds technically known as utraquism is not synonymous with Hussitism). There was already a reform movement in Pargue which was led by John Hus, but the actual practice of giving Holy Communion to the laity could be effectively traced to Jakoubek, one of the associates of John Hus. For it is reported that before John Hus left for Constance, he asked Jakoubek to hold back: "Go slow with it, Kubo," he said, "and when, God willing, I return, I'll help you faithfully." (Kaminsky, 1967:127 Hus's words were reported later by John Rokycana; they are quoted in Nov.II,352. "Jakoubek" was, of course, a diminutive of Jakuk).

The claim I want to make is that it is not very relevant to refer to what happened before the council of Constance with regard to the giving of Holy Communion under both kinds. What I am saying is that the condemnation and burning of John Hus marked a new start in the movement. It assumed a new phase which in its defiance of the Council's decree constituted a direct challenge to the authority of Rome and of the Popes.

Kaminsky writes:

"Jakoubek in Prague was claiming nothing less than the universal church should accept instruction from himself in the correct way to give the sacrament of the Eucharist.
(Kaminsky, 1967:5-7).

Jakoubek had in fact translated his defiance into an effective resistance. The cup which he gave to the laity became the symbol of identity and the symbol of union. Priests who gave Holy Communion to the laity under the species of bread and wine were marked off from the rest of the priests who had continued to adhere to the Roman discipline. Both the clergy and the laity who gave and received the cup 'fraternized' and, under the symbolism of the cup, mobilised themselves into an effective fighting force which defeated the army of King Sigismond, the Holy Roman Emperor, in February 1419 (Kaminsky, 1967:334) and again in 1433, thereby securing the compacts of Prague in 1434.

In order to attract large numbers of followers, the supporters of the chalice utilised a number of techniques, the chief of which was to discredit the Church. To achieve this, the movement pointed out the hypocritical aspects of the Church. For this reason the movement identified itself with John Hus, the reason for whose condemnation was association with Holy Communion under both kinds - a practice which Christ himself had instituted:

"Believe me when I tell you this, you can have no life in yourselves, unless you eat the flesh of the son of man and drink his blood." (John, 6:53).

The primitive church had observed the practice (1 Cor. 11:26) and the custom was in the Church until the 12th Century (Kaminsky, 1967:97). Communion only under the species of bread was then regarded as an innovation, a

contradiction of what Christ himself had done - in short anti-Christ. This had great merit and succeeded in winning people away from the church of Rome. Kaminsky writes:

"And there is evidence from both sides to show that the implementation of Communion in both kinds was working to detach the people from their ordinary priests and to form them into a new congregation - in other words, a new church was being organised in de facto secession from the established one." (Kaminsky, 1967:132).

The wealth of the clergy was one of features taken up to show that the Church had wandered away from the will of Christ. The corruption in the papal courts became strongly associated with the donation of Constantine and no efforts were spared to contrast the worldly outlook of the papacy with the intentions of Christ. Here are some of the illustrations used. Kaminsky writes:

"The first of the contrasts contains the meaning of the whole. Christ bearing his cross is labelled 'The last among men' (Isa.53:3). 'If any man would come after me, let him take up his cross and follow me' (Mat.16:24). Against this there is a picture of the Pope riding a horse, with a fragmentary quotation from the decretals. (Kaminsky, 1967:41).

The sequence resumes - Constantine is shown making his donation; the text is quoted from the Decretum (XCVI.Dist.C.14):

"We give to blessed Silvester and his successors the palace of our empire. We decree that they may ride horses decked out in caparisons and coverings of purest white, and we also confer upon them the various imperial ornaments and all the Glory of our power, as well as giving them the estates that we possess and enriching them with various properties."

Opposite this we have Jesus saying:

"The foxes have holes, and the birds of the sky have nests but the son of man does not have where to lay his head." (Matt. 8:20);

with this there are the following:

"When Jesus therefore perceived that they would come and take him, to make him a King, he fled to a mountain himself alone." (John, 6.15).....

This is clear enough, but it is made to resonate down the centuries, the type repeating itself. Lewis the Pious repeats and confirms the Donation (LX III Dist. C.30).

"I the Emperor Lewis, grant to you, Blessed Peter, and to your successors, the city of Rome with its duchy and suburbs and territories, in perpetuity, just as you have held them in your power and sway from our predecessors to the present and have disposed over them."

But opposite him Peter hangs on his cross saying (Peter 1:18-19):

"Knowing that you were not redeemed with corruptible things, but with precious blood, like that of a spotless lamb, the blood of Jesus Christ." (Kaminsky 1967:42).

The church in Bohemia shared in its own way the worldly outlook of the papacy (Kaminsky H. 1967:9). He cites Novotny, Nab hnti, pp.57 ff; F. Loskot, Konrad Waldhanser (Prague, 1909). Evidence of denunciations of corrupt practices among the clergy abound (Kaminsky, 1967:11) cf. Libellus de Anti-Christo, in Regulae III, 376. One of the forerunners of the reformation in Bohemia, Matthew of Janov, reported that he had two clear paths open to him as a priest:

"Whether to go after benefices and offices, pressing myself forward greedily and shamelessly, which I have usually done, or whether instead to go out of the camp and bear the poverty and reproaches suffered by Jesus Christ. Whether to seek a soft and quiet life in the present, living comfortably and in peace with the multitude, or rather to cling to the faithful and holy evangelical truth." (Regulae, IV 355-9, Kaminsky, 1967:17).

The organizers of the defiance against the Pope and the Universal Church were able to utilise the corruption in the Church as an argument to support their demand for Holy Communion under both kinds. They alleged that their wealth made the clergy dispense with Holy Communion under both kinds so that they might more quickly return home to enjoy their riches. Kaminsky writes:

"The priests were lazy and indifferent, interested mainly in getting through the motions of the divine service as quickly as possible, and therefore discouraging frequent communions and not bothering to give the chalice in any case. The Council of Constance, which defended this corrupt practice was a congregation of Babylon, the synagogue of Satan, its doctors were doctors of anti-Christ." (Kaminsky, 1967:120).

It would not be difficult to see why the reformers were able to attract all classes of people to this cause - the poor, the rich, and so on.

Different classes of people from the Czech nation were inclined to support the movement for various reasons. The poorer classes of the community welcomed it because of its deep religious flavour. Deprived of the riches of this world, they felt happy with the new preachers whose watchword was a return to what Christ had said and done (Kaminsky, 1967:110 cfr. John 6:53). Moreover, drinking from the same cup ensured greater unity and solidarity among the faithful with their priests. Jacob writes:

"The corollary is that partaking of communion is not for the celebrant alone; the emphasis Rokycana laid on the need for receiving the elements 'sacramentaliter' as well as 'spiritualiter' points to the full participation of the laity whose function must not be reduced to one of mere seeing and hearing. (Jacob E.F. 1949:97).

This had an added advantage of bridging the gap between the priests and the laity.

Still more relevant to the poor was the symbolism of the chalice. In traditional Catholic theology, chalice signified salvation. Petrie (1662:537) says that the chalice was the symbol of suffering and of salvation. To drink the chalice was to accept the will of God. To deny the laity of the chalice was seen as something very grave indeed. And it came to mean a denial of the means of salvation

(cfr. Kaminsky, 1967:97; Ibid, 167 also 288 cfr. also Petrie, 1662:537). On the other hand, the word chalice is capable of two interpretations. For some Czech Marxist historians, it symbolises solidarity and unity to ward off economic oppression, especially from tithes or taxes paid to higher authority (Kaminsky 1967:94). Betts writes :

"It is true that the polarity of interest in the Hussite movement has changed since 1948, but fortunately for Hussite scholarship, the present - day Marxist historians in Czechoslovakia and Russia profess a great interest in the movement, which they see not as a mighty moral and religious revolt, but as the 'superstructure to fundamental social and economic stress and crisis, as a significant chapter in the history of class war.'" (Betts, 1969:112).

This view is partially supported by Kaminsky especially where he notes:

"The original religious context and meaning of the chalice were negatively that of protest against the privileges of the clergy, especially the unworthy clergy." (Kaminsky, 104).

The poor priests also had a lot to gain from the symbolism of the chalice. It has been noted that the chalice symbolised reform - a return - a return to the primitive state of the Church when priests did not accumulate wealth for their private enjoyment. The implementation of the new idea meant a complete levelling out. Both classes of the poor had therefore reason to support the movement for reform and consequently the chalice. Heymann writes:

"The more radical deviation from the Roman Creed seems more frequent among the socio-economically lower group of the population, while more enemies of the reformation are clearly to be found among the higher nobility than among any other social group even though many of them joined it temporarily, largely because of the advantages to be gained from the acquisition of former ecclesiastical property." (Heymann F.G. 1962:326).

I would like to record the words of Andrew of Brod, who, although anti Hussite in his writing, had this to say as to why the middle class joined the movement for reform:

"This was the evil reasoning.....of the magnates. 'See the burghers (cives) now surpass us in wealth, the clergy are swollen with possessions, the king enjoys vast treasures and lands. It would be the counsel of wisdom to move the burghers against the king, if he would be unwilling to embrace their sect. In this way we shall prosper no matter what happens, and divide up among ourselves the temporal goods of either the burghers or the clergy, at no cost to us. For if the Lord King sides with the burghers and accepts their dogmas, then indeed, since it is the burghers' will that the clergy must not possess temporal property, that property will certainly be given to us. But if the King does not go along with them, there will be passages of arms, wars will sweep from one end of the realm to the other, and military stipends will not be skimpy - indeed they will be lavish, and thus knights and fighting men will at least be enriched. Moreover, those temporal properties that adjoin our forts and castles will fall under our permanent rule'. This was the secret hidden in the quiver of some, but not all, of the magnates". (Kaminsky, 1967:150).

In point of fact it can be inferred from other sources that the movement had the blessing of the high aristocracy. For example, Spinka (1966:329) maintains that even with the excommunication and interdict of John Hus, he had continued to enjoy the hospitality of his friends. Therefore it would not be surprising if the high aristocracy came to the support of the reform, since it is now identified with John Hus.

I do not think that one can constructively deny the economic slant sometimes assumed by the movement. But in view of the unity which persisted between the different classes of people involved in the struggle, one is inclined to agree with Heymann, who attributes the persistency and durability of the struggles to the fact that the reform movement had now become a national struggle - that is, the different groups had

shed their various private interests and now merged for the defence of the nation. Heymann briefly exposed the nature of the Bohemian society and pointed out that there had been tension in Bohemia on account of the dominant position which the Germans, who were foreigners and a minority group, held as against those of the Czech nationalists, who were obviously in the majority. (Heymann,1954:325). The same situation existed in the University of Prague (Betts E.R. 1947:265; Betts R.R.1949:64;Betts R.R.1969:233;118; Kaminsky H.1967:8). Nor was the Church an exception (Heymann,1954:325).

The united front which the different classes of the people then maintained seems to have rested on their belief that the struggle for the chalice was a continuation of the same process which had led to the expulsion of the Germans, especially in the University of Prague in 1409(see Edict of Kutna Hora). John Hus, who continued to foster the spirit of the struggle, was condemned and burnt in 1415. The Czechs took it not just as an injustice done to John Hus as a person. On the contrary, he became a symbol of national condemnation. Betts writes:

"To the Czechs (John Hus) he has become the personification of the greatness of their national achievement, the embodiment of their pride of race, the protagonist of their persecution and the symbol of their hope and faith."(Betts R.R. 1968:181).

To fight for the chalice came to be identified in the minds of some Czechs with the fight for the Czech nation. Hence the chalice became the symbol of resistance, the symbol of nationalism. To believe in the cup meant belief in Bohemia (Kaminsky,1967:145) and to do otherwise meant a sell-out to the foreign power represented by the current Roman Creed and structure as well as the Holy Roman Emperor.

Kaminsky writes:

"From that time on the Chalice stood as the symbol of the whole movement, the object of most anti-Hussite polemical literature, and the critical point distinguishing all the Hussites, quasi Catholics as well as violent secterians, from orthodox communion of the rest of Europe." (Kaminsky H. 1967:98).

This interpretation of the new symbolism of the cup seems to have a lot of truth behind it, especially as a result of subsequent events. Not even King Wincelas, despite pressure from the Pope and his brother King Sigismond, Emperor of the Holy Roman Empire, could afford to eliminate the Hussites and retain his crown (Kaminsky 1967:295). The spirit of nationalism reached its climax when the University of Prague declared for the chalice (Kaminsky 1967:109). As a result of subsequent events, King Sigismond was deposed (Heymann 1954:338) and the reformists ignored the mighty power of the Pope and Emperor and appointed a king of their own choice (Betts, 1969:267; see also Kaminsky 1967:381).

Whatever one may say about the economic nationalistic overtones of the Hussite/Utraquist movement in Bohemia, it would be difficult for one to deny that it is religion that kept it alive, renovated it and revived it as it passed through different stages of its struggle. This is mainly because religion possessed the concrete visible symbol - the cup - which was the rallying point of the rank and file. Even when there was disagreement about the symbolism of the cup or even when the content of the cup was emptied of its original meaning, it still remained the centre of agreement. Betts writes:

"While all the Hussite leaders, from conservatives like Jan of Pribram and Prokop of Plizen to the most radical like Mikulas of Pelhrimov and Klecanda were united by their utraquism, there was the greatest diversity amongst them both in Eucharistic theory and practice." (Betts 1969:125).

This common agreement on the chalice is what gave the reformers their new identity - a people set apart from the rest of the adherents to the Roman Creed. Following Wycliff, Hus held that the Holy universal church was that formed by the grace of predestination; the ecclesiastical corporation, on the other hand, was composed only on the basis of grace according to present righteousness and its officials could claim the rights of their offices only so long as their virtuous lives convinced the people that the officers indeed enjoyed that grace (Kaminsky, 1968). This is probably why Hus defined the Church as the totality of the predestined (Spinka, 1965:225; Kavka 1966:838) - (Something now similar to the orthodox Catholic teaching on the communion of saints; see Rhaner K. above). According to Hus no one knows who really belongs to the Church. But it is easy to know those outside it because by their works you shall know them (Spinka, 1965:261). This is in harmony with the whole spirit of the reformation which at least originally was aimed at correcting abuses in the Church. Betts writes:

"For Jan Hus and his predecessors the fundamental problem of their day was essentially a moral one, and they saw its solution above all in a change of heart, not in a political revolution or coup d'etat." (Betts E.R. 1969:63).

Since the reformers could not recognise the authority of the Popes because they were all corrupt (Petrie A. 1662:535; Kaminsky 1957:31) nor of a general council because it proved itself by condemning Holy Communion under both kinds and burnt John Hus, they then turned to Holy Scripture as the absolute unshakeable basis for any authority. (Petrie, 1662:533, 538; Spinka 1965:333, 3471; Kaminsky 1967).

Kaminsky writes:

"In the first place the Czech reformers show a preference to the political authority of the Bible especially as it is expressed in the Gospels and in the epistles of Paul and Peter." (Kaminsky, 1967:145; Petrie A.1662:537).

It is this adherence to the authority of the Bible that dominated the whole movement which seems to lead Kaminsky to write:

"In one way or another the radicias had defined the true church as the community of faithful Christians, those obedient to Christ's Law, and the effect of utraquism was to transform this abstract or at best imprecise criterion into one that left little room for doubt. Communion in both kinds was part of Christ's Law, and the priests who gave it, together with the laity who took it, were thereby constituted as a truly Christian community." (Kaminsky, 1967:121).

Having set themselves apart, they had very little room for manoeuvre and soon they became the target for persecution.

Kaminsky writes:

"In those times therefore the faithful Czechs, both clergy and laity, who favoured communion on both kinds and directly promoted it, and who grieved at the unjust death of Master John Hus, suffered very great difficulties, tribulations, anguish and torment throughout the kingdom of Bohemia, at the hands of the enemies and blasphemers of the truth, who grievously afflicted them by plundering their property, by subjecting them to hard sorts of captivity, to hunger and thirst." (Kaminsky, 1957:46) quoted from Master Lawrence of Brezova "Hussite Chronicle" in Latin) ed. J. Goll Fontes rerum Bohemicarum V. (Prague 1813). d. fr. also Kaminsky 1967:310).

The result of the persecution was that Zelivsky urged those who accepted communion under both kinds to flee to Tabor (a small hill outside Prague; its original name was Bechyne). (Kaminsky, 1967:279). He then identified the persecutors (who were, of course, Roman Catholics) with the anti-Christ foretold in the scriptures (Kaminsky, 1957:48).

Tabor is extremely important for the whole Hussite movement.

It is a biblical hill (Jeremiah 46:18). It is here that the adherents to communion under both kinds and to Hussitism set up a new Church community radically opposed to the 'corrupt super structure' of the existing Roman Catholicism. The character and the spirit of the new community was identical to the life of the primitive Christian as it is described in the New Testament. I think this quotation is necessary to illustrate the characters of the new community now operating in the Kingdom of Bohemia. Kaminsky writes:

"The priests indeed exercised three kinds of offices there. The people having been divided into groups, the men by themselves and the women and children by themselves, the more learned and eloquent priests from early morning on, fearlessly preached the word of God and especially those things that concern the pride avarice, and arrogance of the clergy. Other priests sat continually for the hearing of auricular confession. And the third group of priests after divine rites had been performed, gave communion to the people in both the body and blood of Christ, from daybreak to noon.... All those things having been accomplished, as described, they go for bodily refreshment to a number of places prepared there on the mountain and are convivial together in brotherly love, not to the extent of indulging desire or drunkenness, nor levity nor dissoluteness, but to the greater and stronger services of God. There, all called each other brother and sister and the rich divided the food that they had prepared for themselves with the poor. No drink that might cause drunkenness was permitted. Not only the elders but the children too refrained from indulging in any dancing, dicing, ball games or any other game of levity. Nor, finally, could there be found any arguments, theft, or playing of pipes or lutes, as was the custom at church festivals - dedication, but all were of one heart and one will, in the manner of the Apostles, dealing with nothing except what pertained to the salvation of souls and to the reduction of the clergy to its original estate, that of the primitive church. (Kaminsky, 1967:284-5 quoted from Lawrence of Brezova, 22nd July, 1419).

What happened in Tabor is highly significant. It is here that unity was really forged. Not only was there no distinction between the clergy and the laity in the reception

of Holy Communion, but the faithful of all classes were able to share ordinary meals together. This gave them a new identity and they became an example to the reformists all over Bohemia. The effect of this was that Tabor became the citadel of resistance, a place of retreat and spiritual renewal for the different groups of the Reform movement (see Kaminsky 1967:287-288). I think that what happened in Tabor is of great importance for the study of commensality.

Although the laity and the priests were already identified by the fact that they gave and received Holy Communion under both kinds, there did not seem to have been really close unity and feeling of intimate fellowship until the Taborites were able to reinforce their spiritual communion with what I should describe as 'secular commensality'. It is here that the people reflected the community of the primitive church - a state which gave them a sense of a new mission (see Kaminsky, 1967:339). With constant weaving of biblical themes with what Tabor now represented, one can understand how the Taborites became convinced that they were set apart by God to combat a holy war in His name (cfr. Kaminsky 1967:281). Influenced by the spirit of this self-appointed mission, a good number of the Hussite military men (50,000) marched down at night and overthrew the advancing forces of King Sigismund in February 1420 - an army on its mission to reclaim Bohemia for the Empire and for the Church (Kaminsky, 1967:334; Betts E.R. 1947:382; Heymann, 1954:336; Kavka F. 1960:849). The same spirit which guided them in 1420 may have been there and most probably intensified when once more they took to the field and dashed the hopes of the Emperor and the Pope in 1431 (Jacobs E.F. 1949:81). Rome accepted defeat in

the agreement reached at the council of Basel in 1436 (Betts R.R. 1969:265).

The two victories and their aftermath are significant enough to establish the point of this chapter - communion as a threat to the authority of Rome. But the reformists (Hussites/Utraquists) achieved more than just communion under both kinds for the laity. Since 1420 there has been considerable constitutional developments in Bohemia (See Betts R.R. 1969:264-284; Kaminsky H.1967:362). What is relevant to our purpose is that ^{the} Hussites could not have succeeded if the cup had not included the poor, the rich and the religious leaders. It seems reasonable to infer that the common men provided the military strength which defeated Roman Catholic forces in the two most conspicuous wars. Without the magnates, who were the more conservative elements of the movement, stability in the movement and contact with the opposing forces of the Emperor could hardly have occurred (cfr. Jacob E.F.1947:122). The part played by the religious leaders needs no further elaboration here because it is clear from the character of the whole movement.

Taking the overall view of the success of the Hussites, one can begin to appreciate its historical significance, especially with regard to the composition of the Church. Just as Hus and the Hussites (Hussite/Utraquist movement) in their theoretical approach to the riches of the clergy owe a lot to the philosophical ideas of William of Ockham, John of Paris and Marsilius of Padua, (see Kaminsky,1963:60-63) in the same way the establishment of a local church in Bohemia (even though not very successful) demonstrated to the reformers of the 16th Century in Germany and England that the authority

of the Church could be effectively challenged. In other words, the reform movement in Bohemia gave a start to the process that led to the fragmentation of Western Christendom. The figures below can only provide an inkling as to the type of separation that exists among those who accept Christ as God and Lord (I omit Eastern Christendom).

Roman Catholic	423,000,000
Lutherans	68,000,000
Baptist	
Presbyterians	41,000,000
Baptists	40,000,000
Methodists	30,000,000
Anglicans	30,000,000
Congregationalists	5,000,000

These facts add weight to what Kaminsky has written. It may, therefore, be hoped that the Western world will once again see Hussitism as it was seen in its own day, as a fundamental challenge to the old order, not only in Bohemia but in Europe. (Kaminsky H. 1967:2).

As for the anthropologist, what happened in Bohemia provides him with a problem - namely the significance of food, for without the attachment to the chalice which thus created two groups opposed to each other, the history of the Church today may have been different. Holy Communion, which originally had been the bond uniting all Christians, was transformed into a symbol of division or a symbol of separateness. The Hussite revolution in Bohemia was the first movement in the Western Christendom. Its success could only be accounted for by the use they made of Holy Communion. First of all, the Hussites abolished inequality in the ritual meal (Holy Communion). This clearly gave the Hussites a definite

identity and marked them off from the rest of the Christians, who continued to respect the old traditional discipline (those who received Holy Communion under the species of bread alone). Further, the Hussites adopted another measure which was equally effective. They backed the unity which then existed between them by further acts of commensality. Following the custom of the primitive Church, both the poor and the rich were able to partake of food from a common table, and all property was held in common (Kaminsky 1967).

These measures reinforced the unity which already existed among the Hussites and added to their sense of fellowship. But since they gave and received the cup and also shared everything they had with each other, they felt they provided a continuity with the primitive Church.

One could see clearly the implication for power relations in the activity of sharing communion food and wine. From now on, at least in the Western Church, the success of the Hussites had demonstrated effectively that the power of the Church of Rome could easily be challenged. With the successful creation of small independent churches, Holy Communion had come to stand for both unity and exclusiveness. Like the muddyi tree in Ndembu ritual which signifies unity at one point (Turner, V.W. 1964:22) and at other times social differentiation (Turner, 1964:23), Holy Communion stood for a number of things. For the Hussites the chalice was a symbol of equality, a symbol of unity in opposition to the authority of Rome. For the Hussites in confrontation with Rome the chalice stood for oppression.

For the Roman Church in confrontation with the Hussites the chalice which the Utraquists gave to each and demanded

for the entire Church in Bohemia, and probably for the whole of Christendom, was a symbol of dissension and rebellion against the properly constituted authority of Rome. For every Christian denomination today Holy Communion has come to signify a symbol of autonomy and independence. What is certain is that these divisions would hardly have existed had it not been for the power inherent in the mechanism of sharing things.

COMMENSALITY AS A MECHANISM FOR SUSTAINING SOCIAL INSTITUTIONS - FREEMASONRY AND ROTARY INTERNATIONAL

This chapter considers how sharing food helps to create and strengthen unity in two different social institutions whose membership cuts across cultural and religious boundaries. The institutions are Freemasonry and Rotary International.

This is not a comparative study. But the analyses are done to show how sharing food is utilised to strengthen social institutions and promote friendship between previously unrelated individuals. Secondly I want to re-emphasise that commensality as a mechanism for the creation of unity is consciously pursued even by the most sophisticated men in the highly industrialised societies.

The Freemasonic Lodge is an organisation which draws in different categories of men for meeting, during which they are able to share a meal or partake of some light refreshments. Membership of a Lodge knows no cultural or religious boundaries. Lennhoff refers to this aspect of Freemasonry when he writes:

"We certainly regard all Masons as brothers, be they christians, Jews or Mussulman; for freemasonry is universal and not restricted to any particular creed, sect or mode of worshipping God"(Lennhoff E. 1941:206 see also Dewar J. 1966:76;79; see also Decadal Celebrations - Lodge No.3789 1927 p.18).

What is relevant is that Freemasonry forges a new form of relationship which enables the members to share meals together on the basis that they are 'brothers', for in the local lodge there is usually a monthly meeting at which meals are shared. Sharing food is highly institutionalised in the lodge and would in fact be regarded as part of the Masonic ritual. Sidney Jenkins, giving account of the running of a

Kent Lodge during its first fifty years of existence, shows how important sharing food is to a lodge. His record reads:

"Catering for the Lodge has never been an easy matter, in as much as each meal had to be provided for in its entirety. Had the meeting been in a building where meals were provided daily the problem would have been a much more simple matter." (Signey A. Jenkins on Lodge No. 2499 p.69; see also Rt. Rev. Bishop Herbert on Lodge of Sincerety No.943 1863 - 1963 p.11; cfr. also Cohen 1971.

Fred T. Cramphorn takes this point much further and argues that without the sharing of food that exists in the Lodge, Freemasonry could hardly survive. The following are his arguments:

"A great deal of the success of Masonry may be traced to the fact that it provided an excuse for the foregathering of kindred spirits on conditions enabling them to smoke friendly pipes and to partake of light refreshments. There seems to have been, at any rate among the so-called moderns, a tendency to develop this social side of Masonry at the expense of the more intellectual aspect of the art and to emphasise the pleasure of the festive board above those of the Lodge room. So much was this so that the 'making ceremony' was relegated to a mere adjunct, carried on in a neighbouring room or perhaps in a corner of the restaurant room itself." (W.Bro.Fred T. Cramphorn 1932:280).

Besides the monthly banquets, there are different ritual occasions which bring the Masons together in the Lodge and enable them to share yet other meals or drinks. These may include initiations(see J. Carroll 1927:71; H.I. Callon on North American Indian Lodges 1937:750-751; see also History of Airedale Lodge No.387:1827- 1927 p.12); Jubilees (see Annuals of the Lodge of Union 1885 p.91); and installations (see Extracts from Minutes of Meetings from the Lodge of Freedom No.131 7th December 1937). In addition to these festivities each Lodge holds annual festivals where guests are welcome - each Mason is free to come with his

wife (Dewar 1960:100). The annual festival is also important for the Masons because it enables them to invite and be invited by Masons of neighbouring districts - thereby giving them the opportunity to widen their contact beyond that of the domestic lodge. (see Sidney A. Jenkins p.36 also Moira Lodge 131st Anniversary; Freemasonry Quarterly December 1835:433). The local lodge is not therefore autonomous. It is actually linked through a close network of relationships, the centre of which is the Provincial Grand Lodge. The Grand Lodge also has an annual dinner party at which representatives of the local lodges are invited (see Devon Provincial Grand Lodge April 1846 where a number of local lodges were represented officially. See also Epworth Lodge Decadal Celebrations p.22).

William Grey Clark in the constitution of Freemasonry (Constitution 13) acknowledges that the Annual Festival of the Provincial Grand Lodge affects all the subordinate Lodges in the district and prohibits any local lodge from holding meetings on this specific date. Constitution 13 reads:

"There shall be a Masonic festival annually on the Wednesday next following St. George's Day, which shall be dedicated to brotherly love and refreshments and to which all regular Masons may have access, on providing themselves with tickets from the Grand Stewards of the Year. No private lodge within the London District shall have a Masonic feast on the day of the Grand Festival" (William Grey Clarke 1858:22).

Even on the national level, especially in the National Grand Lodges, sharing food achieves considerable significance. An incident by which the government of Britain threatened the entire Masonic organisation with imposition of tax duties because of the quantity of alcohol they consume is highly revealing. Jenkins records:

"A letter from Grand Lodge announcing that the Inland Revenue department had ruled that Masonic Lodges were liable to this new entertainment tax when artists were engaged at after proceedings. The Master W.Bro. Howse stated he was present at Grand Lodge when the matter was discussed and from the legal view given it was evident duty would be chargeable, but it was not known how it would be assessed." (Jenkins A.on Lodge No.2449 pp.33-4)

Thus, activities in the Lodge include sharing, eating and expressing commensal relationships. In fact Mackey seems to imply that Freemasonry is utterly convivial, resembling in pattern every other aspect of a banquet in any city, except that care is taken to remove any discussion which would distort the brotherly relationship which the meal is meant to promote. Mackey's account which I reproduce below is important, as it confirms the view that meals in the lodge promote commensality in the atmosphere associate with its ritual. He writes:

"The Banquet in English and American Lodges does not differ from the convivial meetings of other societies, with the exception perhaps that the rule prohibiting the introduction of debates on religious and political subjects is more rigidly enforced. But in the French Lodges, the banquets are regulated by a particular system of rules and the introduction of ceremonies which distinguish them from other social assemblies. (Mackey 1845:58; see also Mackey 1953 Vol.II... 1008 article on Table Lodge.

This quotation is of special importance in two aspects. It firstly emphasises that sharing food is recognised in different cultures as a mechanism for promoting friendship. Secondly, it adds that this friendship is not just promoted by people sharing a meal together; some measures should be used to reinforce the act of sharing a meal. This is why the Masons prohibit any discussion which would detract from the 'brotherly' relationship which the meal is meant to

promote. Thus, it becomes obvious that commensality implies more than being accommodated in a specific eating house.

Cohen also sees the importance of sharing a meal as a mechanism for uniting the lodges in Sierra Leone and considers commensality in the lodge as an important sociological phenomenon:

"Sociologically the most important features of the ceremonial is not the formal ritual of the order, but the banqueting following the performances. It is here that, amidst heavy drinking and eating, Masons are engaged in the process of true 'fraternising'. In my view this informal institution within Masonry, whose procedure is neither planned nor consciously pursued, is the most fundamental mechanism in welding the members of all the lodges into a single highly inter-related organisation"(Cohen A.1971:441).

A vital part of Freemasonry is thus the sharing of food. Even the ritual and symbols used in the rite of consecration of a lodge expresses this (Dewar 1966:178). The lodge is a friendly place where one can go and expect to share a meal; the traditional place for celebrating the Masonic ritual used to be the tavern (Dewar 1966:116; Lennhoff 1941:22).

The suggestion of sharing meals may explain why it is necessary that Masons should be friends whether they are old members (Dewar 1966:22; Cohen 1971:433) or whether they are new applicants (Mackey A.G.1883:363; Dewar 1966:22; Cohen 1971:435). The consecrated Lodge thereby becomes a house or a room where people meet in friendship; this is in fact the strength of Freemasonry. It is an organisation with an institutional mechanism which transcends the relationship of kinship, country, class and climate to unite different categories of people into a new kind of brotherhood.

Writing about the sharing of a meal in the lodge Mackey stresses the importance of the Annual feast to Masonry:

"The convocation of the craft together at the Annual feast for the laudable purpose of promoting social feelings and cementing the bonds of brotherly love by the interchange of courtesies is a time-honoured custom which is still, and we trust will ever be, observed."
(Mackey 1845:101).

The Freemasonic Lodge shows this unity by proving a useful meeting place between Masons who may be visiting from different parts of the world. There, they can also be received and share meals together. Dewar quotes Dr. Baxter, who refers to Masonry as a useful institution to join if one is a traveller:

"We are not allowed to urge upon anybody to join the craft but I would say to any young man who is going abroad that it would be to his advantage if he were a Freemason because, wherever he went, whether it was to Fiji or to the Philippines, or right round to Peru, he would find Freemasons who would be his friends and his brothers." (Dewar J.1966:79; cfr also Cohen A. 1971:433).

There is a very useful account in the Decadal Celebrations of Lodges being a centre for welcoming Masons from other parts of the world. A number of Masons had gathered in London for an Ecumenical meeting. During the course of their stay they visited Epworth Lodge where Lord Amptill delivered an address of welcome and invited them to a meal. (see Decadal Celebrations 1927:22).

The most interesting account of Masons from different countries meeting together to share a meal is reported by Lennhoff, who quoted an extract from the notes of a Russian General in Prussia during the Napoleonic Wars. The General was initiated in the Russian Military Lodge 'Zum Holigen Georg'

in Frankfurt-on-Main in November 1813. The note reads:

"We had very little pleasure during this campaign on account of incessant quarrels with our allies who wanted to end the war with Napoleon, of whom they had a holy fear. Our chief consolation was the 'Iron Cross' Lodge which was formed in the Prussian Army in 1813. They entertained us Russian guests with the greatest hospitality. We passed there the only pleasant or rather happy evenings we had during the French campaign. The speeches made in the lodge were full of ardent love of country, and when delivered the day after on the eve of a battle, they filled our souls with the most noble resolve." (Lennhoff E.1941:119; for a similar account see Dewar J. 1960:85).

There are two characteristic features in Freemasonry which may affect commensal relationship between Masons in their lodge. These are that Freemasonry is an elitist and hierarchical institution. As an elitist institution it is thus highly selective in the choice of members. Dewar quotes the Masonic regulation which emphasises the type of men to be admitted as members:

"A man of sufficient ability to be capable of understanding the revelations of philosophy, theosophy and science...." (Dewar J. 1966:210).

Cohen has shown that, in Sierra Leone, West Africa, Freemasonry is synonymous with high class (see Cohen 1971: 435).

I think it is the elitist element in Masonry which could account for the fact that the Negro lodges were not recognised by the American Grand Lodges as late as the early twentieth century. This is also in W.G. Burrows' mind when he writes:

"It is also a fact beyond dispute that much of the progress made by the Negro races, especially in the United States and Canada, has been due to the inclusion of Masonic ideals. It was estimated by an American Masonic Journal that, in 1917, there were about 130,000 Negro Masons in the States, Canada, Liberia and Haiti. While the American Grand Lodges do not agree that the

Negro shall be admitted to membership of the Craft, it is probably due to the fact that, for centuries, he was held in subjection by the Whites and, that, as a consequence, his lack of culture and knowledge are or were sufficient to bar him from a participation in the inestimable privilege we enjoy." (W.G.Burrows 1931-32; 221-231).

Since the American Grand Lodges, at least during the early twentieth century, did not recognise Negro lodges, it follows that they were not on commensal terms. Thus successful initiation to a Masonic lodge does not appear to carry with it the potentiality of sharing meals with Masons in other, different, lodges. It is the same elitist overtone that may explain why there are Class lodges in Britain and Occupational Lodges in America (see Lennhoff 1941:182).

Masons are also differentiated in their lodge by the possession of symbolic signs of status. There are important differences of rank in Freemasonry. Dewar's presentation of this rank is highly revealing:

"The bewildering proliferation of Masonry can also provide a means of satisfying the innocent sceptic. A man disappointed with the secrets received after earlier initiation may be persuaded that a worthwhile secret is roosting in the next degree above, and he can never complete the Masonic search. Even a totally dedicated lifetime of effort suitably financed would be insufficient, and in the higher reaches of Masonry advancement is frustrated by a lack of patronage, some degrees being conferred only on specially selected candidates and in strictly limited numbers." (Dewar 1966:204).

The interesting point about this hierarchical structure in Masonry is that it appears to affect to some extent the degree of interaction in the Lodge and also the commensal relationship. First of all, since admission to inner secrecy involves extra payment of some fee, it follows that only those who could afford it would be admitted to such ranks.

There is also some evidence that, in some areas of the world, those seeking promotion to higher ranks must demonstrate their economic competence by feeding the entire lodge (W. Bro. H.I. Callon P.M. 1937-38: 750-751] see also Cohen 1971). The Hierarchy provides an opportunity for status seekers and men of ability and of power.

The following extract is an illustration of ceremonies of initiation to a side degree in an English lodge. It shows clearly that the group is marking itself off for ritual purposes, which may also give it an exclusive right to eat of meals after the ceremony. Dewar takes the extract from Richard Carlisle:

"A side board is prepared. This is covered with a table cloth and on it are placed as many pieces of bread as there are knights, and a goblet of wine. The paper with the sacred initials (I.N.R.I.) upon it is deposited upon the altar. Every knight has a white wand in his hand. The most wise strikes his upon the earth thrice and declares that the Chapter is resumed. Then he leads seven times around the apartment and is followed by all present, each stopping in front of the transparency to make the sign. At the last round each knight partakes of the bread; and still preserving the form of a circle, the next wise takes the goblet, drinks out of it and passes it round. When it comes to him again he places it upon the altar and the knights give each other the grip". (Dewar 1966:208).

The singing and chanting that accompany this ceremony are meant to show that the group is an exclusive one, in a sense a group of more intimate brothers within a family of brothers (see Dewar 1966:171;209; cfr.also Manual of the Craft Degree 1971:79). Furthermore, there is strong evidence to show that Master Masons held separate meetings every three or four months (see Extracts from the Minutes of the Lodge of Freedom and Peace No.131 7th December 1937). The significance for the present discussion of the various facts

mentioned here is that promotion to a higher rank is a necessary condition of sharing certain types of meals.

John Stokes, writing up the minutes of a Lodge meeting held in West Riding, Yorkshire, emphasises that everyone present at the meeting and dinner party held provincial rank. (cfr. John Stokes - Provincial Grand Chapter, Southern Counties of England No.915;P.3). I think the most conspicuous illustration of a high ranking exclusive meal enjoyed by Master Masons is provided in the Cedar Rapids of the United States. The meal recorded preceded a conference which was exclusive to Master Masons. The Record reads:

"To describe the atmosphere of thanksgiving is as impossible as to put into words the exaltation of the working hours of the conference. But minds which had come to respect one another in the gentle battle of debate, no less than hearts which had been opened and laid bare before us all in the work of the preceding days, now joined in a common bond of fraternal love. North, South, East and West gave full and mellow expression of that which lay upon every heart. It was a thanksgiving indeed. All had foregone the pleasures of home firesides on that memorable day that the communion of Masonry might be quaffed. And as the rattle of dishes ceased and incenses began to rise from the lighted cigars, the dining room seemed to be transformed into a cathedral of thought the smell of which was as radiant as the never to be forgotten rose had been fragrant." (Cedar Rapids 1918:357).

The extract suggests that, as a result of eating and smoking together in the atmosphere described, the thoughts of the people seemed to be transformed into one. A kind of Unity of Ideas seemed to have been there, though the extract does not specify it.

It must be emphasised, however, that the commensality which the Master Masons enjoy does not detract from the unity or the brotherhood which is promoted in the ordinary

'day to day' banquets in the lodge. Rather, the commensality is a sign of unity on a higher level. All the Master Masons must have come from lodges 'in communion' with each other; hence the sharing of the meal may also signify unity of Freemasonry.

Commensality in Freemasonry can therefore be presented as a mechanism of unity and fellowship.

B

Rotary International is a social institution which, like Freemasonry, draws together different categories of people who share meals together on the basis of equality. But it differs from Freemasonry in the sense that the members are drawn on business or professional basis. To forestall further ambiguity and imprecision, I think it is better to present a definition suggested by John Galsworthy, himself a Rotarian:

"A Rotary Club is a club composed of selected business and professional men, each of whom in his own way and according to his own thoughts, methods and conditions applies in practice "the idea of service", by and through his vocation (John Galsworthy 1934:3- see also Rotary Wheel Vol.X 1924:86).

Rotary International could in fact be termed an elitist organisation since only the leading men in different businesses in the locality would hope to be accepted as members (Galsworthy 1934:24). The condition for membership fully justified this interpretation. Below is a record of requisite qualifications for membership. It is stipulated:

1. That the proposed member is one of the directing forces of a business.
2. That the firm he represents is one of the leaders in that line of business.
3. That his reputation for integrity and character is above reproach.
4. That his personal credit is unquestionable
5. That he is socially acceptable

(see Rotary Wheel Vol.XII, 1921:339 cfr.also Ibid Vol.X 1924:86; and 332).

In a locality these categories of people form one business commensal group and they articulate their unity every week by lunching together (see Rotary Wheel 1925 Vol. XI:121, cfr. Vivian Carter 1925:3)

In the Rotary Club commensality assumes a new phase. Here commensality implies equality not on the basis of the economic strength of the different businesses represented, nor on the basis of equality on the status of ~~the~~ people present. Here the fact that they are all in business becomes the basis of equality. The social status of the members and the economic strength of their businesses are overshadowed by the common business link and a retail trader finds himself sharing the meal with a business tycoon - all on the basis of equality.

It would be attaching too much sociological value to the sharing of food to suggest that different classes of people would easily fraternise as soon as food is presented. Commensality is fundamentally an expression of status equality or differentiation through the symbolism of sharing food. Vivian Carter in fact suggests that it was not easy to establish Rotary Club in Holland because of this tendency to lump different classes of people together only in the name of business. His record is very revealing:

"Where, however, you would strike against the rock of tradition and prejudices would be in persuading the professional or high grade commercial or industrial to sit at meat even sliced ham or cheese with the retail tradesman or dealer. The idea that there could be any possible affinity between them would be received with scepticism such as only a Dutch man knows how to exhibit." (Vivian Carter 1925:8).

Although the first attempt to establish Rotary in Holland met with difficulty, it does not follow that there

has been no success in other areas. To enable all these different categories of people to share meals under any condition approaching the acknowledgement of a form of brotherhood, however, strong effort is needed on the part of the directors or organisers to instil into the members a feeling of common identity. Galsworthy recognises the necessity of this effort and thus shows how it is brought to bear upon the group during the actual dining: He writes:

"The system of seating at lunch may provide that you never sit next to the same person twice in succession; it may provide that you sit at the same table with certain people for one month and then move to another table where you will sit with an entirely different set of people (Galsworthy 1934:29).

There appear to be two reasons for the seating arrangement. First of all it is an attempt to create a truly commensal group out of these people who probably would never have met to share some meals, let alone discuss matters of common interest. The second reason is to thwart any possibility of using the luncheon period for the promotion of cliques who would use the umbrella of Rotary International to disguise their intentions. The seating arrangement has special importance for a better understanding of commensality. It demonstrates that commensal relationships are not achieved simply by people dining together in a localised place. The act of dining should be suggestive of some common interest. Common interest or common value must at least implicitly be acknowledged to make commensal groups at least relatively permanent. Eating together in a specific place even when this is dictated by a certain need, does not amount to the existence of a commensal group. At most it implies that such people are potential commensal partners. An example of such prescribed meals which do not turn the set of people into a commensal group

is the dining at the Inns of Courts by student advocates who must complete a number of meals before they are called to the Bar (see Consolidated Regulations 31st July 1968 p.19).

Sharing a meal together may indicate a potential commensal group or commensal partners. But when the group dining together backs up their activity with discussion of common interest or reflecting common values, then the possibility of engendering commensal relationships begins to emerge. It follows, therefore, that real commensal groups must articulate their unity by doing things together. Even the most primitive people seem to realise this.

The Lugbara for example do not just perform their ritual. They divide the meat in strict traditional pattern and the division is preceded by a detailed exposition of their geneological history. The Nuer too during a settlement of breaches in relationship which result from homicide do not also just eat the sacrificial meat. They expose the history of previous disputes and settlements suggesting thereby that the two groups of kin have more to gain by continuous interdining. It has also been seen that some commentators feel that, without the 'secular aspect' of Masonic banquet, Freemasonry could hardly be expected to survive.

Charles White seems to have underlined the success of Rotary International achieved solely by means of sharing food in comparing business men to soldiers in combat. He draws the conclusion that commensality expressed in Rotary is vital to eliminate the hostility and conflict which business competition very often engenders. Writing about Paul Harris, the founder of Rotary he records:

"To have converted business men to his views by ordinary propagation of his new ideals would have been impossible. He therefore used the common-sense plan of least resistance by making use of the natural condition of mankind, namely the love of self and the desire for friendship. He commenced a club of business men, which was to meet and discuss business problems once per week at luncheon table: and in order to remove the suspicion which business all over the world had regarding each other, he limited the membership to one man in each business. (Charles E. White 1920, Rotary Wheel Vol. VI:66; see also Thos. Stephenson 1970 Ibid Vol.III 57).

The frequency of the meeting is highly relevant.

It must create a sense of awareness of the linkage between the members of a club - and the clubs of neighbouring districts.

Each Rotary Club is, to a large extent, autonomous. Election to any office is by merit and no external authority appears to influence the choice of a candidate outside his club (see Rotary Wheel Vol X,1924:300). Rotarian Van Amburgh described Rotary as a kind of democratic institution where the individual members merit is assessed for what it is (see Rotary Wheel Vol.VII 1921:360; Ibid Harry H. Rogers 1923:61). With regard to organisational pattern each club is also linked to another in the neighbouring district by means of representatives called directors. (Rotary Wheel 1920:171). In consequence of this, business men in the district are able to promote contact still using the symbolism of sharing meals. I should like to quote a district Rotary Annual luncheon which, in all things except ritual, bears close resemblance to Masonic Annual Provincial festival.

"A Luncheon of unusual interest took place in unique surroundings on Monday April 6th on board R.M.S. Olympic in Southampton Docks. The Southampton Club was present in force and the President, Rotarian F.R. Brown, presided. The various clubs in No.11

District were represented with their ladies, with the exception of Channel Isles Clubs, the gathering reaching record proportion for the luncheon in this country, and it is doubtful if a Rotary luncheon anywhere has reached quite the number who attended on this occasion.."
(Rotary Wheel Vol.XI,1925:162;see also Ibid p.43).

Rotary International is organised in much the same way as Freemasonry but although the connecting links in the two respective institutions are similar, the function of their structure is completely dissimilar. In the Rotary organisation promotion to directorship is only for service - to act as a channel of communication between the domestic club and the rest of the clubs in the outside world. For as well as district luncheon parties, Rotary International organises both national and international meetings and conventions to promote the peaceful meetings of business elites both inside and outside the nation.

But whether the meeting is held in the local club or it is being organised on the national level, the emphasis in the minds of every Rotary is 'fraternisation'.

W. G. Manchester describes his own personal experience in one of the meetings he attended at Southport. His experience reinforces the argument I have already advanced to the effect that the commensal relationship, if it is to last, must be deepened by the members participating in joint activities beyond the meal. Well aware of the aloof character of the English he felt the effect of the welcome which the Southport organiser produced on that occasion. Here is his record:

"Registration quickly over and room numbers obtained, the first real business commenced in dressing for the reception by Rotarian Brighthouse at 7.15, followed by what I might call the

'get-together Dinner' in the ballroom with Rotarian Brighthouse in the chair. To a student of psychology it was remarkable to note how quickly a feeling of strangeness was dissipated and how rapidly the genial warmth of the true Rotary spirit spread amongst all present. As it was my first Rotary conference it gave me at once a new viewpoint - one felt one was amongst friends and that the icy reserve for which we British are famous (or infamous some say) was certainly not present."

(W.G. Manchester, Rotary Wheel Vol.X 1924:86).

The same feeling of ease and comfort among people previously strangers, especially at meals, is found in international conventions of Rotary (see Rotary Wheel Vol.XI 1925:175). For further emphasis on the utility of Rotary Club (see Speech by Michael Sadler - Master of University College, Oxford) Rotary Wheel Vol.VI 1920:282, also 14th International Convention, address of Welcome by Herman Spoehrer 1923:11).

There is one important theme which runs throughout the analysis. Great importance is attached to the role of sharing food in welding Rotarians together. It has been suggested in fact that, without the opportunity to share meals, Rotary International is as good as dead. Charles T.Marden, in an attempt to discover what has kept Rotary alive, obtained the following view, from an ex-Rotarian:

"For me, the only real reason for urging men to join Rotary is the social values involved. Eating together weekly, meeting business colleagues or competitors, singing and laughing together. That is the chief reason why the service clubs have survived."
(Charles T. Marden 1935:86).

From the evidence we have so far seen, sharing food is an important mechanism for the development and continuity of both Freemasonry and Rotary International. Commensality can also be seen to derive its force not merely by physical consumption of food together. Common interests, common value should be co-ordinated with sharing food to make a commensal group relatively permanent.

CONCLUSION

It has been shown in this Thesis that commensality plays different roles in different cultural areas. With the Lugbara of Uganda, commensality at the internal shrine of the minimal inner lineage demonstrates the social dimension of Kinship. It becomes a kind of dramatized genealogy where each person present discovers his next of kin and the people on whom he would count for help in various context. Here commensality symbolises unity and solidarity and clearly marks off one group from similar groups in the wider community. For the Nuer of the Sudan commensality implies peace and its absence may be a sign of tension or feuding.

What is said of the commensal relationship among the Lugbara could equally be said for the Azande of Central Africa. But here the commensal relationship created by the blood pact assumes a different social role. The pact accounts in part for the stability of Azande society where class and tribes are differentiated by language and historical origin. The blood pact with its emphasis on equality becomes a mechanism by which the feeling of inferiority due to status differentials inherent in Azande social structure is overcome (See Evans Pritchard 1971:9). But with the Igbo of Nigeria a formal exclusion from the sharing of the Kola-nut marks off 'osu' as a distinct category of people and emphasises that all those sharing the nut are 'freeborn'. The Igbo regard it as a part of their culture to make no fuss about meals with anyone present. In this context the kola-nut becomes significant as the one item of food, the sharing of which reveals status differentiation and forms an important means of identification among the Igbo.

With the Hindus of India, the sharing of food becomes a crucial symbol by which commensal groups can identify themselves and be identified by others within an all Indian

pattern, or within an interacting group, while the non-sharing of food becomes a means by which the hierarchical structure of India is made real in everyday life. Here commensality plays a double role - sharing of food marks social equality and, non-sharing of food is a demonstration of social distance or social status.

The Hussite demand for the giving of the chalice to the laity may seem a purely liturgical detail, yet it becomes the rallying point of the Bohemian protest.

The revolution thus launched mobilised sufficient power to force the Roman Catholic Church as represented by the Council of Basel to make major concessions in 1434.

The issue of the Chalice reduced the boundary between priests and people. In the course of the struggle the traditional catholic distinction between certain groups of givers and receivers of the chalice was abolished.

The large scale commensality which ensued marked the emergence of a new social group. The Freemasonic order and Rotary International are discussed to show the power of commensality in developing and maintaining unity in social institutions made up of categories of people who in normal circumstances would not come together to share meals, let alone discuss matters of common interest.

The sharing of food therefore emphasises equality and refusing it to a person is a clear demonstration that he is either inferior or an enemy. This leads to a consideration of, excommunication as a weapon by which a commensal group preserves its values by expelling from the group individuals who no longer conform to or maintain the values of the group. Some form of excommunication is resorted to by all the commensal groups referred to

in this thesis.

In the Roman Catholic Church, where it is highly developed, excommunication is defined in the Code of Canon Law as a censure by which one is excluded from the communion of the faithful with certain canonical effects (C.I.C.2257:1; Bouscaren 1963:897). The intensity of the excommunication is measured according to the gravity of the deviation from the values of the Church. According to Canon 2260 para 1, the excommunicate is specifically forbidden to receive the sacrament. At times some excommunications prohibit the excommunicate from physical contact with the loyal children of the Church (see Bouscaren 1963:897). It can therefore be seen how this would affect the sharing of Holy Communion in the Church. This weapon was used frequently during the Hussite period.

A similar pattern of disciplinary measures is noticeable among the Lugbara of Uganda. Their censure could in fact be so strong as to include violence and physical mutilation (see Middleton 1965:46).

It also exists in the caste and caste-like social systems, with the difference that the existence of lower castes where the higher caste man cast out from his group, could find company makes the penalty for deviation less noticeable. This, nevertheless, does not hide the issue that the penalty for deviation in a caste system is a form of excommunication. Edward Harper uses the word excommunication when he describes this form of deviation.

"Higher caste individuals who are motivated to enter a lower caste are generally in some difficulty within their own caste if

indeed not already excommunicated."
(Harper E.B. 1968:61).

Among the Igbo of Nigeria, any breach in the sharing of the kola-nut among the freeborn Igbo with an 'osu' imposes upon him a serious social sanction which would affect not only him, but his children. (cfr. Achebe 1963:33; Ojiako 1966:84).

The same pressure to conform to the ideals of their groups is apparent among the Kung of Nyae region of South Africa. Here Lorna Marshall describes how the sharing of meat is used to reduce tension within the community and points out that the local ideology based on the idea of sharing meat taken in hunting helps to keep the wandering community together. (She writes:

"And the Kung fear fighting with a conscious and active fear. They speak about it often. Any expression of discord makes them uneasy. Their desire to avoid both hostility and rejections leads them to conform in a higher degree to their system of social law. If they do deviate, they normally yield to expressed group opinion and reform their ways." (Lorna M Marshall 1961:).

Many more examples could be listed to show the widespread use of excommunication as a tool for the preservation of the ideals of a group.

The Masons use it (Mackey 1883:98-99), as do business groups.

People eat together for a variety of reasons in different societies. And for similar reasons exclude others from sharing meals with them. One would therefore want to know why sharing food exercises such roles in

different societies. For this problem Crawley has sought and given what amounts to a mystical explanation of the sociological value of food. He writes:

"Eating food together produces identity of substance, of flesh and thereby introduces the mutual responsibility resulting from eating what is part of the other and giving the other what is part of oneself to eat."
(Crawley 1960 II:121; cfr. also Richards A. 1932:178).

I do not think Crawley's explanation is valid. Food prolongs and sustains life. To share food with someone is an implicit acceptance that the other's life should be preserved. Not to share food in certain circumstances is an expression of covert hostility. Alternatively it could amount to an explicit claim that one's life is superior - an assertion of higher status.

What is said of the individual sharing food with another could equally be said of a group. For the group to share food with another is an acknowledgement that the other group is of the same social status and maintains similar standards of social value. For a commensal group to preserve its value it must equally refuse to share food with others it considers inferior.

This interpretation contrasts with that advanced by Crawley and with that by Richards (cfr. Richards 1932:162 ff). I think their position stems from the fact that they confined their discussion of commensality to primitive cultures where commensality is linked with ritual.

Thus Mary Douglass is able to write:

"At this level the laws of nature are dragged ~~in to~~ sanction the moral code - this kind of disease is caused by adultery, that by incest, this meteorological disaster is the effect of political disloyalty, that the effect of impiety. The whole universe is harnessed to men's attempt to force one another into good citizenship."
(Mary Douglass 1966:13).

On this argument ritual non-sharing of food becomes a whole universe of prescriptive rules by which groups exclude and are excluded from eating together, the sanction for violation being the threat of danger to the community. This sanction provides the basis for legitimacy of authority in the community. The Lugbara, the Indian and Igbo cases provide clear examples. In particular, the Azande case in which the king would not eat food provided by a commoner subject for fear of losing his authority is an excellent illustration of the sociological importance of food taboos.

But it is evident from this thesis that commensality can be identified in all kinds of societies whether primitive or industrialised. In this context commensality is very valuable for social anthropology. For even when the last small scale society has disappeared, men will still be signalling consciously or unconsciously their separation from, and their solidarity with their fellow men through eating or abstaining from eating together.

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